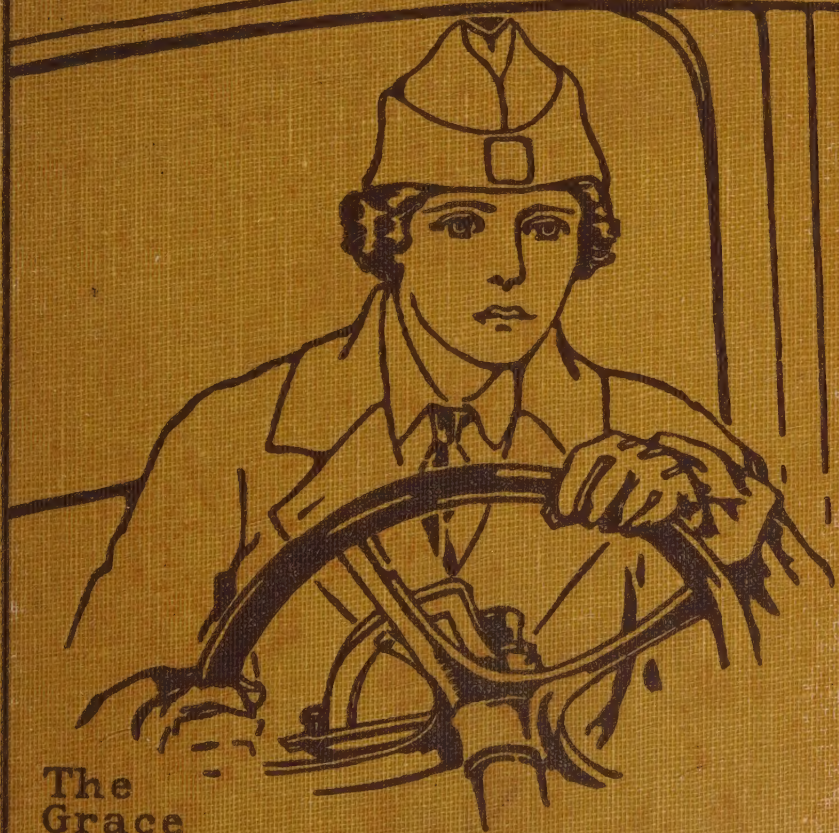


Grace Harlowe with the Yankee Shock Boys at St. Quentin



The
Grace
Harlowe
Overseas Series

Jessie Graham Flower, A.M.



“The Ditch Ends Here.”

Frontispiece.

Grace Harlowe with the Yankee Shock Boys at St. Quentin

By

JESSIE GRAHAM FLOWER, A.M.

Author of The Grace Harlowe High School Series, The Grace Harlowe
College Girls Series, Grace Harlowe's Return to Overton Campus,
Grace Harlowe's Problem, Grace Harlowe's Golden Summer,
Grace Harlowe Overseas, Grace Harlowe with the Red Cross
in France, Grace Harlowe with the Marines at Chateau
Thierry, Grace Harlowe with the United States Troops
in the Argonne, etc., etc.

Illustrated

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GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE YANKEE SHOCK BOYS AT ST. QUENTIN

CHAPTER I

A DRIVE THAT ENDED VIOLENTLY

“**W**HAT, drive with you, Grace Harlowe?” demanded Elfreda Briggs.

“Why not? The front is quiet on our sector. Jerry isn’t dropping any bombs, nor is the road being shelled. You will have a pleasant ride out to the front lines and back, and you will benefit by the change and the air.”

Grace had just started the engine of her motor preparatory to a trip to the front lines on the St. Quentin sector to bring back a load of wounded men to the field hospital.

“I rode with you once, you will recall,” observed Miss Briggs. “I landed in a roadside ditch with one of those huge French trucks on top of me. If I go out with you now I probably

shall be smacked by a shell, even if there is but one fired during the night from the enemy lines. Why, I came out here to see you off and say good-bye, for every time you drive toward the front I fully expect that they will be bringing you back with yourself as an ambulance case."

"Don't be silly, Elfreda. One has accidents even in peaceful Oakdale, and one occasionally turns over with her car. Out here it is war and we look for variations. I am rather inclined to think that they make life interesting. Are you going with me?"

"If you will promise not to ditch me, I will," promised J. Elfreda in a doubtful tone.

"Wait until I run in and ask the major's permission," directed Grace, skipping over to the office of the commanding officer of the field hospital. She was back a few moments later.

"All right," she cried. "The major has charged me to bring you back safely, and threatens me with dire punishment if I smash you up. The major said he cannot spare you until after the end of the war, with all the hospitals over here evacuated for good. I told him that if you got smacked or smashed, it was reasonable to expect that I would share the same fate, and that that would be punishment enough. Wasn't that liberal of me—agreeing to be wrecked, crushed or smashed as the case

might be, just because you were. To me that seems perfect hospitality.”

“If you don’t stop that I’ll not move from this field hospital, Grace Harlowe. Are you trying to ‘get my wind up?’” demanded Miss Briggs, using the parlance of the doughboy for being afraid.

“Hop in,” directed Grace. “I must be off or the chief of my section will be putting me on report for neglect of duty. Goodness knows, I have enough black marks against me for wrecking ambulances, violating the rules of war by walking into the enemy lines and back again without asking permission of either side, so, if you love me get in and be lively about it.” Grace laughed merrily, and Elfreda dragged herself to the seat in the ambulance as though the effort gave her pain. The young hospital attendant sighed a long deep sigh of resignation as she settled down.

“The lamb has permitted herself to be led to the slaughter. *C’est le guerre*—it is war,” she added with a typically French shrug of the shoulders, much to the amusement of her companion.

Grace threw in the clutch and was off with a rattle and a bang so characteristic of the type of cars that the ambulance sections were using. Elfreda had been relieved from duty for the

night, and Grace knew that her friend really needed a change, even if that change did lead her up near the front lines where, at any moment, the dogs of war might break their leashes and be at it tooth and jowl. She also was aware that many clashes between patrols had taken place that evening, and it was to bring back the wounded from these night-raiding parties that she was going out to an advanced dressing station on this occasion, as she had been doing every night for the last week.

Traffic was heavy on the road, and, though Elfreda's heart was literally in her throat, Grace did not appear to be the least disturbed by the many narrow escapes from collisions that they experienced. Elfreda had worked herself into a nervous sweat before they had proceeded a mile from the field hospital. Finally they got on a road that was used exclusively by ambulances, and there the going was much better, so that Elfreda relaxed a little.

"I should die did I have to travel over this road every night as you do," she declared with emphasis. "How your nerves ever stand up under the strain is beyond my comprehension. Then the shells and the machine-gun fire and—"

"Never mind the rest, Elfreda. As for nerves, one must forget that she has such

things, otherwise she will wear out quickly. The few weeks that Tom was missing nearly caused the wreck of my nervous system, and after I got my head plumed I made up my mind that never again would I worry, no matter what happened. You understand what I mean—that it doesn't pay to tear one's self to pieces with worry and—"

"Will you please watch the road and keep your hands on the wheel?" begged Miss Briggs. "You can talk without gazing up into my eyes and emphasizing your remarks by whacking me on the shoulder. There is something else that I wish to say, and this is as good a time as any. Listen but keep on driving."

"I intend to," replied Grace Harlowe Gray laughingly.

"It is about yourself. Many things have occurred since we came out near the front, but it is of the significant ones that I am speaking now, that relate to yourself."

"Meaning what?"

"You know quite well what I mean—the frequent attempts on your life."

Grace laughed good-naturedly.

"Why should anyone, especially the enemy, wish to be rid of so inconsequential a person as myself, Elfreda? Isn't it a little far-fetched to think that such a thing could be possible?"

“Not when one has observed as I have done.”

“I must admit that the attempts of the spy André were a little disconcerting. I have wondered if the attempts, made to capture all the ambulances of our section that night, when I landed inside the German lines, might possibly have been part of a plan to get me, but the probabilities are that there was another reason for it. You know the Huns are making war on those whose work is a work of mercy, just as they are doing to the combat sections of the American Expeditionary Forces. I am thankful that they did not identify Tom as my husband. Had they done so I fear it might have gone hard with him while he was a prisoner in their hands. The same with Yvonne, all of which leads me to the conclusion that the Boches are thick-heads,” added Grace laughingly.

“It is not a subject for jest,” rebuked her companion. “One day they will get you unless you safeguard yourself. Why, you go about everything you do with an utter disregard for your own safety that, with most persons, would be considered suicidal.”

“I have found that the bold course—I presume I should say the unexpected course—is most likely to succeed. Now for instance take

our present situation. We are driving calmly along a peaceful French highway with no enemy within a mile or two of us—we are positive of that—when, suppose an enemy patrol should rise up and order us to surrender, what then? Do you get the point? The bold course might succeed. Mind you, I am not saying it would, but it might. The very unexpectedness of it would make for its success and for our downfall.”

Elfreda shivered.

“Don’t talk like that,” she begged. “It’s spooky enough out here in the darkness without your conjuring up a ghost in the form of a Hun. Should such a thing occur, I should ‘expire on the spot,’ as Anne Pierson would put it. I wouldn’t travel over this road alone at night if, by doing so, I could win the Congressional Medal. You—you don’t think it possible that anything of the sort could occur to us—us here?”

“It’s here now!” cried Grace sharply, throwing on the power and sending the ambulance ahead at a terrific pace, until the car rocked and skidded, threatening to turn over with every side slip.

Elfreda was speechless. She did not know what had caused her companion’s exclamation, but that something terrible was about to hap-

pen she felt instinctively. Cold chills were chasing each other up and down her spine and her brain seemed benumbed, nor had Elfreda the power to move hand or foot. Grace was leaning forward a little more than was her wont, peering at the road, every faculty keyed to concert pitch.

The blow fell. Neither woman knew what had happened, but they felt the blow, a blow that threw Elfreda forward on the dashboard, a blow that laid Grace Harlowe across her steering wheel and knocked her nearly breathless. The ambulance, amid a jangling, ripping, rending sound, leaped up into the air as though it were a flying machine "taking off" for a flight.

"Hold fast and keep your head!" cried Grace, with the same cool-headedness that had given her a leading place on the basketball team in Oakdale, oh so long ago. It seemed a far cry from those happy days, as related in GRACE HARLOWE'S PLEBE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL, to the part she was now playing in the greatest war in the world's history, but she was fighting this last thrilling battle with the same spirit that had so often carried her to victory in the old happy days.

Grace's friends who have followed her career and who have learned to love her, will recall the experiences of Grace and her friends in those

exciting times as related in GRACE HARLOWE'S SOPHOMORE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL, GRACE HARLOWE'S JUNIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL, and GRACE HARLOWE'S SENIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL. They also well remember those dear friends and associates of Grace, Nora O'Malley, Anne Pierson and Jessica Bright, comprising the "Original Four."

Having graduated at high school, Grace and Anne entered Overton College, while Nora and Jessica chose a conservatory of music for their further training. New friends gathered about Grace at Overton, friends whose lives were now linked with hers on the western front, such friends as Elfreda Briggs, Emma Dean, Arline Thayer, Mabel Ashe and others. The stories of those happy years, the readers of this volume will recall, were fully told in GRACE HARLOWE'S FIRST YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE, GRACE HARLOWE'S SECOND YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE, GRACE HARLOWE'S THIRD YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE, GRACE HARLOWE'S FOURTH YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE, GRACE HARLOWE'S RETURN TO OVERTON CAMPUS, and GRACE HARLOWE'S PROBLEM.

In a following volume, GRACE HARLOWE'S GOLDEN SUMMER, the Overton girl became the bride of her lifelong friend, Tom Gray. After a year of the most perfect happiness Grace had

ever known, the great world war called Tom to the service of his country, soon to be followed by Grace herself, who joined the Overton Unit and went to France. The story of her experiences there is related in *GRACE HARLOWE OVERSEAS*, in which she becomes involved in the plots and counterplots of the Old World. In *GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE RED CROSS IN FRANCE* she reaches the desire of her heart, and is assigned to drive an ambulance on the American front. In a following volume, *GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY*, the Overton girl meets with many perils and hardships; but for sheer daring, her experiences as related in *GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE UNITED STATES TROOPS IN THE ARGONNE* outrival all that had gone before.

The scene has now shifted to the St. Quentin front, where the Second Corps of the United States Army was facing the ramparts of Germany in the form of the Hindenburg Line, heralded far and wide as being impregnable. The hosts of American brawn were moving up, ready to crouch for the spring that would carry them through the enemy line and deliver a blow that would break the morale of the enemy and bring the great World War to an early close.

Grace, now a seasoned veteran, believed, from what she had observed, that this end was

not far away. She saw that the enemy's ammunition was becoming more and more defective, that the prisoners taken by her own side had little morale left, showing that the manpower of the Boches was at low ebb. These young boys in the enemy army were a clean-cut lot of fellows, boys who could smile, who looked as if they might be moulded into human beings and decent citizens. Still, the Overton girl had little faith in anything that came out of Germany and viewed all things German with suspicion. During her long war experience she had come to know something of German kultur. She was experiencing it now, as her car suddenly leaped into the air, for Grace, at the moment of the shock, had seen several helmeted heads rise from the roadside ditch and recognized those helmets as belonging to the enemy.

Another thing that Grace had observed in a quick glance as she flashed past was an ambulance bottom side up at the side of the road. It was an American ambulance too.

The steering wheel was jerked from Grace Harlowe's hand as the car, in its leap, headed for the ditch. Its front wheels landed fairly in it, the rear wheels were lifted high in the air, and the car was whacked down on its top, which crushed in with a mighty crash, leaving the ambulance a wrecked and shapeless mass.

CHAPTER II

BOCHES MISS THEIR PREY

WHEN the car stood up on its nose, both girls were hurled violently over the dashboard. They landed on reasonably soft sod, with a jolt that left each almost breathless. Elfreda was somewhat stunned because she had not been quick-witted enough to keep her head up.

"Oh, Grace!" moaned Elfreda.

"Stop it! Roll! Roll away as fast as you can!" commanded Grace sharply.

"I—I can't," wailed Miss Briggs.

"Huns, Elfreda! They will be here in thirty seconds. Roll, I tell you!"

The word "Huns" had the desired effect on Elfreda Briggs, who quickly collected her wits and began rolling up the bank, followed by Grace, who kept urging her to go faster.

They made the top and rolled over the crest.

"Up! Run for your life!" commanded Grace, giving her companion a violent push as Elfreda staggered to her feet. Grace took firm hold of Elfreda's arm and ran her down the slope, Elfreda groaning and protesting.

“The barn!” cried Grace. “It’s our only hope.”

The building for which she was heading was but a short distance away, not more than five hundred feet, but unless they reached it before their enemies discovered them, the chances were that the two girls would be captured.

They failed. As they were almost within reach of the goal a shout and a shot told the Overton girls that they had been discovered. There was no need to look back for they well knew that men were running after them. Grace formed her plans on the instant.

“Into the barn!” she cried. “Pay close attention and do exactly as I tell you, but do it quickly.”

Once inside, Grace turned for a brief glance at their pursuers to see how much time she might reasonably have, to secrete herself and her companion. The men already were half way across the space intervening between the road and the barn.

“We can make it. Climb through the window on the other side!”

“I—I can’t.”

There was no time to waste words. Grace grabbed Elfreda by an arm and rushed her toward an open window at the rear side of the building, and, grabbing her foot, tumbled her

out headfirst. Grace dove through the window, falling on Elfreda, who screamed. Springing up, Grace pulled the sliding window shut.

"Stop that noise! Keep it up and you will find yourself in a German prison camp!" rebuked Grace.

"I don't care. I might as well be taken prisoner as to be killed in trying to get away from them. We'll be caught here anyway."

"Of course we shall," agreed Grace. "Crawl under the barn. You will have to pinch yourself a little, but you can make it. Move!"

Elfreda was assisted, none too gently, in her effort to squeeze herself between the floor of the barn and the ground, tearing her skirt and maltreating herself generally, at the same time groaning and protesting so loudly that Grace was certain the sounds must reach their pursuers.

Once under the barn floor there was more room, for the floor of the barn was a full eight inches higher than the level of the ground.

"Far enough," whispered Grace. "Please stop that moaning, Elfreda. Moaning will not help you, but getting yourself together will. I hardly think they will find us here."

"I—I don't care much whether they do or not, Grace Harlowe. I knew it—I knew that if I went out with you I should regret it. Not

that I blame you, but you simply cannot keep out of trouble. Trouble is your strongest weakness."

"Fine, fine! So sorry that Professor Morton can't hear you so far forget your college training as to mix your English in that fashion. 'My strongest weakness!' I must remember that and tell it to the Overton unit as a terrible example of what a college education does for one. Sh-h-h-h-h! They are in the barn! Don't speak."

Both girls could hear the thud of heavily booted feet and guttural explosions as the enemy searched for their prey. Things were being overturned up there, grain bins prodded with a pitchfork, straw thrown about, and every nook and corner explored by the Huns.

"They are here! They couldn't get out without leaving by the door," Grace heard a German voice declare. "Find them!"

The search was resumed, and with renewed vigor, as the sounds from above reaching the two Overton girls indicated, both of whom were listening with every faculty on the alert, J. Elfreda in an agony of apprehension. Grace Harlowe admitted to herself that their position was a perilous one. She did not believe that the enemy would go away without looking under the barn, but if they used no light they would

have difficulty in finding the two women who lay flattened on the ground beneath the barn.

"They are going out," whispered Grace. "Be guided by me and make no move unless I tell you. I wish I might be able to see them."

After a few moments they heard voices quite near. The enemy were now at the rear of the barn, and at least one of them was trying to find a place large enough to enable him to crawl in underneath. He found it at last.

"Crawl toward the front of the building. They're in!" whispered Grace.

Elfreda made no reply, but began creeping in the direction indicated by her companion, with Grace close beside her.

Grace had already discovered that the ground was higher as they moved toward the front of the building and she felt, too, that this very condition might make for their safety, for if the two girls could not find sufficient room in which to crawl, a man surely could not.

"Flatten out and squeeze yourself in and go as far as you can, but be sure that you will be able to get out. I can't assist you much in that."

"I can't move another inch," whispered Elfreda. "Oh, what shall I do?"

"Lie down and rest. Control your breathing, hold your breath when he gets close to us,

if he does. It is our only hope. If they discover us they are fully equal to hurling a grenade at us. Silence!"

Elfreda restrained her breathing so completely that her companion could not be certain that she heard it at all. By now the man under the barn was so close to them that his breathing sounded unnaturally loud. He was having a difficult time of it too, for the narrow space between the barn floor and the ground was not suitable for his bulk.

Grace, with an ear turned toward him, figured that he was within gun length of them. A yard more and he would be able to reach them. The man never covered that yard, however. He simply found it impossible to make it. What was more, Grace gathered from his utterances that he could not even turn around.

To the delight of the Overton ambulance driver the fellow began struggling, and raging in alarm lest he fail to extricate himself. The more he struggled the more excited he grew, finally ending in his calling for help.

A companion crawled in and, grabbing the soldier by the feet, assisted him backward inches at a time.

"I hope he sticks, I hope he sticks!" whispered J. Elfreda.

"If he does we are surely lost. They will

find a way to get in here even if they have to rip up the floor," replied Grace. "Be careful! A word too loud and we are lost."

The man's alarm seemed suddenly to lessen, from which Grace inferred that he had reached a position where he found it possible to help himself to some advantage. This was confirmed a few moments later by the man himself declaring that never would he crawl under that barn again even though ordered to do so by Hindenburg himself. Soon after that the voices of both men were heard outside.

"Thank goodness they got him out!" exclaimed Grace in a low voice.

"Yes; let's hope they now go on about their business. I know I never shall be able to mould myself back into my former shape," complained Elfreda. "How long shall we be forced to stay in this awful place?"

"Not long, I hope. I don't like the air here. Let us keep quiet and listen. They seem to have suddenly stopped talking."

Elfreda said she thought she heard some one walking on the barn floor.

"Yes, I heard it too," agreed Grace. "Let them walk. If they do not do anything worse than that I shall be well satisfied."

The two girls lay listening to the movements above them, movements that told them another

search was in progress up there. After a time the men left the barn and silence settled over it. Grace was about to propose that they investigate when she was halted by a voice on the outside, close by them.

“Step lively in there! All hands under cover!”

“Those fellows are up to mischief,” declared Grace Harlowe, not a little disturbed. “Let’s move down toward the other end. I have a feeling that the quicker we get out of this place the more healthful it will be for us.”

“You mean the quicker we get back home,” corrected Miss Briggs. “Never again for Elfreda Briggs. She has had enough—an elegant sufficiency. As the soldiers say, ‘well fed up.’ Hark! What was that?”

“Keep moving,” urged Grace. There was a trace of excitement in her tone. “I think we had better try to go out the way we came in. I—I don’t believe we can waste time making experiments—and please keep your voice down. You don’t realize how loudly you are speaking. Remember, we are in peril, very great peril.”

“Grace Harlowe, I smell smoke!” cried Miss Briggs despite the warning of her companion about raising her voice.

“Never mind, keep going. Do your sniffing after we are out of this.”

Grace for several minutes had been sniffing the air. She too had smelled smoke, and now the odor was so strong that she could scarcely keep herself from sneezing.

"They are trying to smoke us out, I do believe, Loyalheart," decided Miss Briggs. "The fiends!"

"Right you are, but not for the reason you name, Elfreda. The reason is that they are what you have called them. I think—"

A sudden exclamation from Miss Briggs cut short what Grace was saying. She crawled forward demanding to know what new trouble Elfreda had gotten into.

"I'm in a hole! Help me out. Please! Will there be no end to this awful experience?"

Grace crept forward as rapidly as possible; then she too uttered an exclamation.

"We are in a ditch," she whispered excitedly. "Don't you understand, Elfreda? Now we shall be able to make better progress for the ditch is wide enough so that we can crawl on all fours. The only question in my mind is as to where it leads. It seems to lead in the right direction, toward the western end of the building. Wait! Let me go ahead. I can't trust you to be the pathfinder."

Creeping around her companion, the ambulance driver felt her way back into the ditch

and began groping ahead of her. It was a queer place for a ditch, but Grace reasoned that it had been dug out at the time of the erection of the building, to drain the water off and thus prevent early rotting of the woodwork. She had seen such things done in America. The wise farmers near Oakdale always dug a trench before laying the foundation for their barns and stables.

"Hark! Do you hear that roaring?" demanded Elfreda. "Listen, Grace!"

"I hear it, dear."

"What is it? For mercy sake, don't tell me this is something else that we must face!"

"Keep moving. I see light ahead, but if it shouldn't prove to be what I think it is, we are in a predicament. Keep cool. Don't lose your presence of mind for an instant, for we shall both very shortly need all we have."

Grace was crawling forward rapidly, at the same time feeling her way cautiously, not knowing what she might encounter. Finally reaching a point which she concluded was the end of the barn she raised her hand and groped. The hand came in contact with a solid foundation wall. The faint light that she had observed ahead of her had disappeared; the light that she had thought came from the light of the stars proved a phantom.

"We are at the end. We must cut back and try the rear of the building, nor have we a second to lose."

"See now light it is getting. Oh Grace, what does it mean?" cried Miss Briggs as a dull glow dispelled the gloom of their hiding place.

"It means, Elfreda, dear, that the Huns have set the barn on fire and that unless we get out of here quickly we shall be burned to death. That is real Boche kultur," answered Grace calmly. "Hurry, please hurry!"

CHAPTER III

THE TRICK THAT FAILED

ELFREDA was too stunned to think or to act. Their situation was indeed a desperate one, and Grace Harlowe knew it full well. She had known for several moments that the barn was on fire, but did not wish to alarm her companion until it became absolutely necessary to do so. Now that the ground under the barn was beginning to reveal itself in the light of the fire above them she feared they would be unable to get out without being seen by the enemy, who she believed were standing

off at a safe distance and watching for the two girls to come out.

"Look!" exclaimed Miss Briggs, suddenly finding her voice. She was pointing to the wall that her companion's groping fingers had found a few moments previously.

Turning quickly Grace also uttered an exclamation.

The wall that she had found was a short section constructed over the ditch. At the base of this little section of wall there was a hole. It was a shallow hole, too small to permit a human being to get through, the ditch having been partly filled up at that point. What was on the other side the Overton driver did not know, but she believed that here lay their best chance for escape, though they might gain the outer air only to be shot down by the waiting Huns.

"Pass that piece of board! Lively!" commanded Grace sharply.

Having the piece of wood in her hands, Grace began to dig with all her might, pushing the dirt out through the small hole as fast as she could get it loosened.

"I'm gaining on it," she cried. "Get ready for a dash."

"Is—is there anything that I can do?" begged Elfreda.

"Yes; creep up closer so as to be ready. It

won't be much of an opening, but I think you will be able to squeeze through. Don't bother me. Keep watch toward the rear, and keep down as much as possible or you may get a Hun bullet through you."

Grace dug desperately for a few moments, then, casting the board aside, began pawing out the earth toward her with her bare hands. Some of it flew back into the face of Elfreda Briggs and got into her eyes, mouth and nose, causing her to cough and sneeze.

"All set! Let's go!" cried the ambulance driver.

Elfreda crawled up and peered into the hole, but found little cheer in so doing, for it was black dark in there.

"Where does it lead to?" she gasped.

"Never mind, get in. I'll push if you get stuck."

"You go first, Loyalheart."

"Get in!" Grace's voice was sharp and incisive.

She drew back to permit her companion to flatten herself in the ditch and grasping Elfreda by both ankles began pushing her forward.

"Don't speak out loud no matter what you find when you are through the hole, and don't get up. Stay flat and wait for me. This is an

order, not a request," added Grace, resuming her pushing, Elfreda assisting by clawing at the dirt ahead of her and wriggling and squeezing her body through the narrow opening. Her feet finally disappeared and Grace heard her drawing herself away from the opening.

"Are you all right?" questioned Grace, her own head already in the hole, her much more slender body wriggling into it rapidly.

"Yes," answered Miss Briggs.

"Be cautious. I must have a look about before we make a move," gasped Grace and resumed her clawing and wriggling.

Her head was soon outside; her shoulders went through, but her hips stuck. Grace backed a little and turned over on her side.

"Get hold of me and pull," she directed.

Elfreda grasped her by the neck.

"No, no! By the shoulders. Wish to pull my head off? There! That's better." She twisted and writhed, gaining slowly, then all at once she found that her hips were clear of the opening in the wall. A moment more and she was out. A dense growth of berry bushes covered the outer entrance, and it was these bushes that had originally kept the light of the stars from filtering through to them, though Grace had seen a ray of that same light some little time before.

The flames were crackling and roaring on the inside of the building and the light was flickering over the ground for many yards on either side of it, the fire not yet having gone through the roof or the sides of the barn. Grace took a sweeping observation while Elfreda sat on the bottom of the ditch with her head between her hands. Grace touched her on the shoulder.

“Look yonder! What do you see?”

“Something moving about. Is it soldiers?”

“Huns! Waiting for us to come out when they will shoot at us. Hun kultur again, Elfreda. We shall fool them—their trick will fail to produce expected results, but we must get out of here. I don’t know how far this ditch extends, but if it should come to a sudden ending a few yards from here we shall have to cut and run for it. If it comes to that you will turn to the left and run for the road like all possessed, zigzagging like a destroyer. I will oblique a little to the right, reaching the road—if I am in luck—a little further to the westward. Do you understand clearly what you are to do?”

“Yes. What then?”

“Run up the road until you meet me.”

“But the Boches, Grace! They are out there,” protested Miss Briggs.

“No, they are all over here. They are out

there among the trees and bushes with their rifles at ready. You will see, if we show ourselves. Let's go!"

This time Grace crawled ahead. They soon left the bushes behind them, and it was well they did so, for sparks and burning bits of wood were beginning to shower down on that clump of berry bushes, as Grace observed upon halting to look back.

She had crawled some thirty yards, the ditch growing more and more shallow as she progressed, which indicated to her that it was about to run out to the surface. She halted again.

"Elfreda, what I expected has come to pass. We are at the end of our tunnel. The ditch ends here."

"Oh, that is too bad."

"We will wait here for a few moments, now that we are well out of the way of the fire, and have a breathing spell. Perhaps they may go away after a time. What I fear is that they may come this way when they do move. In that event we must be ready to duck and run before they get so close that we can not run for fear of being shot."

"Cheerful, isn't it?" observed Miss Briggs.

"According to one's point of view. I should not call it exactly cheerful, though I have been

in worse situations. Perhaps I care more about it now that I have both a husband and an adopted daughter. I owe something to little Yvonne, so I must be more careful and take fewer chances."

"And what about Tom?"

"He is a soldier. He understands that in war one must take the chances of war. He has done so, I have done so, and so have you. However, let's not forget that we are both on sentry duty. I see those fellows have gotten out of sight. Some of them probably are on the other end of the barn-lot so that all the ground around the building may be under observation. I do not quite understand why that patrol is working way out here a full half mile inside of the American lines," wondered Grace.

"They are after you, Loyalheart. That is quite plain."

"And came near bagging you along with myself," chuckled Grace. "I don't know how I am going to convince the chief that I was not to blame for wrecking the car."

"Yes, if you continue the good work of wrecking ambulances, it will take the entire output of a factory to keep you going. You think—"

"There they come!" cried Grace under her breath.

Elfreda started up and would have risen to

her feet had not her companion jerked her back.

"Keep down! Why aren't you more careful? The Boches can shoot even if they are thick-headed in other directions. You will find that they can, in a very few moments from now. Get ready, Elfreda."

"For what?"

"To run for it."

"I can't, I simply can't, Grace Harlowe."

"It's not a question of can't. You must unless you wish to be taken. That will mean that I shall be captured too, for I shall not go on and leave you here. You understand that, do you not?"

Elfreda nodded.

"Listen, dear! When you start to run try to imagine that the entire Boche army is after you and that, if they catch you, you will be subjected to the rack or some other violent form of torture. Work yourself up into a terrible fright, but keep your head. You will find it will lend fleetness to your feet."

"I don't have to work myself up into a fright, Grace Harlowe."

"Get ready." Grace took a long scrutiny of the skulking figures off there just outside of the bright light from the burning barn, after which she swept other parts of the scene with a searching gaze. No movement was discernible

on any of the three other quarters within her range of vision.

“All ready, Elfreda dear. I’m sorry I got you into this. If we get out of it I never shall take you out again, no matter how much you may urge me to do so. I didn’t stop to think of what it might lead to. I see now that I was assuming a terrible responsibility, and if anything should happen to you I never could forgive myself. You understand thoroughly what you are to do, don’t you?”

Elfreda said she did.

“Should you not find me, you will follow right on along the road, running until you come up with some of our people. When you do you will tell them what has occurred, and ask them to throw a cordon about the place in a wide circle and try to bag the whole bunch of Boches. I will start first to attract their attention, and when they begin to shoot at me, you run for your life. Let’s go!”

The two girls rose to a crouching position, shook hands and leaned forward for the start. Grace leaped out and streaked it across the lot to the accompaniment of a shower of whistling rifle bullets.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESCUE OF J. ELFREDA

ELFREDA followed directions to the letter. The instant the firing began she too sprang out and, turning to the left, ran on fleet foot, dodging this way and that, stooping low as she ran, proceeding some distance before she was discovered. It was then that the bullets began to whistle overhead and around her, some snipping up the dirt ahead and to one side of the fleeing girl.

Elfreda needed no encouragement to simulate fear. She had it.

“They are shooting at me!” was the thrilling thought that filled her mind. “Shooting at me, Elfreda Briggs!”

It was a new experience for the dignified young lawyeress, one that she wished she might have been spared from. In the meantime Grace Harlowe was running, dropping down, dodging, springing up and dashing ahead in a manner that must have upset the marauding German patrol. At least it did not assist them to accurate shooting, for few bullets came near

enough to the girl to cause her great distress. One went through her gas mask, another clipped the shoulder of her blouse and a third plowed a furrow through her right legging.

“There goes Elfreda!” cried Grace. “Good for her. Just see that girl run.” Grace laughed in spite of the desperateness of her own situation. Elfreda disappeared in the shadows, still running, and the young ambulance driver drew a sigh of relief, believing that her companion was now safe, the German patrol no longer able to see her.

In a few moments Grace was creeping down the bank to the road, after first satisfying herself that there were no Germans about, having reached a point some distance to the westward of the place where Elfreda might be supposed to have made contact with it, and there she sat down to rest briefly and wait for Miss Briggs. After sitting for fully fifteen minutes, Grace, becoming worried over her friend’s failure to come on, decided to go back to look for her. She knew very well that it was not a prudent thing to do, but it was what Grace Harlowe was going to do, no matter what obstacles might be met with.

In the meantime Elfreda had topped the crest of the bank, where she stood for a few seconds swaying and gasping for breath, then plunged

headfirst down it and rolled over and over until she finally brought up at the bottom of the ditch in a dead faint.

As Grace neared the scene of their accident, she proceeded with great caution. On the way there she had picked up a rifle, there being many of them about, and, satisfying herself that it was fully loaded, slung it under one arm.

"Just for luck," she muttered. "I'm not a combatant, but having a weapon gives one confidence in such circumstances as these."

A scream brought the Overton girl up short. She recognized the voice as belonging to J. Elfreda Briggs and, throwing prudence aside, dashed ahead at full speed.

"There they are!" she whispered with a tightening at her heart as she made out half a dozen helmeted heads bending over something at the side of the road.

"Help! Oh, help!"

Grace Harlowe took her own self promptly in hand. All traces of excitement instantly left her; she was cool and collected, alert and clear-visioned as she slipped out of the road and took to the ditch where there would be less danger of discovery.

"The Boches have found her. They will take her, but I'll drive them off or perish in the effort," declared the Overton girl beginning to

creep up on the scene. She could now see her companion sitting up, the men bending over her, apparently questioning her.

“Now, Mr. Boche, look out!”

Bringing the butt of the rifle to her shoulder Grace took careful aim over the heads of the men of the enemy patrol and pulled the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

It sufficed to cause the Boches to throw themselves flat on the ground, but not enough to start them going.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

“How I wish I dared shoot lower,” muttered Grace Harlowe, but she dared not do so for fear of hitting Elfreda.

Bang! Bang!

The need for closer shooting no longer existed, for the handful of Huns had sprung to their feet and were racing down the road. Grace sent two bullets at them, firing so low that if she did hit them at all it would be in a leg or foot. What the result of that shooting was she never knew, but she felt reasonably certain that she had accelerated their movements considerably, for they put on a fresh burst of speed and were almost instantly lost in the gloom.

“Elfreda!” shouted Grace, starting towards her on a run. “Get up and hustle! Don’t sit there! They’ll be back!”

Miss Briggs got to her feet unsteadily.

"Quick!" cried Grace grabbing her by an arm and rushing her back along the road, Elfreda stumbling, gasping and half fainting. Never since going to war had she so completely given way as she had that night.

"Climb up the bank," directed Grace. "The road isn't safe just yet. What happened?"

"I—I fainted."

"Keep going for a few minutes. We must get further away, for those fellows will soon recover from their fright and realize that it was only one rifle that was shooting at them. Then they will come back. You weren't hit?"

"No. I might as well have been as to be scared to death. I know I shall never get over that terrible fright."

"Yes, you will. Sit down now. I wish to keep near the road. If I can get in touch with some of our own men we may soon be able to catch those fellows of the Boche patrol."

After a brief rest the two Overton girls resumed their journey, Grace fresh and active, Elfreda scarcely able to drag herself along, and very shortly thereafter the driver of the wrecked ambulance heard troops approaching. She crept up to the edge of the bank and peered at the oncoming men, who proved to be a patrol under command of a sergeant.

"Halt, Sergeant! Friend speaking. Grace Gray, ambulance driver."

"Ambulance? We are looking for two cars that didn't reach their destination. Know anything about it?" demanded the sergeant.

"Yes, I drove one of them. I don't know who had the other, but both cars are in the ditch on the left side of the road about half a mile to the eastward. There may be a man under one of them. I had no time to look, for the Boches followed us up after we escaped and were shooting at us," Grace informed him.

"Where's the fire?"

"It's a barn burning. We were hiding under the barn, and the Hun patrol, failing to find us, set the barn on fire. We had to run for it. If you hurry you may be able to catch them, as they are quite likely to return in the hope of getting myself and my companion."

The sergeant demanded to know who her companion might be, and Grace gave him the information, whereupon the sergeant ordered his men forward at double time.

"If he keeps that up he will frighten the enemy away and never even catch sight of them," muttered the girl. "Come, Elfreda, we may safely return to the highway now that we have some of our own men between us and the Boche patrol!"

They reached the main road later, Elfreda feeling a little better, and Grace in rare good spirits. She had outwitted a Boche patrol, which in itself was sufficient to put her in good humor with herself and the rest of the world, for at least the rest of the night.

Grace reported the loss of her car at headquarters and inquired who the missing driver was. She learned that it was Corporal Robert Cavanagh, one of the best of that corps of daredevil drivers to whom driving through storms of steel was merely a part of the day's routine.

After making their report the girls turned in. Grace sat on the edge of her cot brushing her hair, while Elfreda with chin in hands sat hunched down on her own side of the tent reflecting over the events of the night. Grace regarded her quizzically.

"A penny for your thoughts!" she called teasingly.

"You're welcome to them," retorted Miss Briggs. "My thoughts are that you are the most successful unsuccessful that it has ever been my misfortune to come up with."

"How so, disregarding the English that seems to have become a habit?" demanded Grace.

"You fail to keep out of trouble but you are successful in *getting* out of it. There will come

a day when you will not, but I shall not be with you. I have had my fill."

"You will feel differently about it to-morrow. Remember, this is war, and war is not gentleness. It is desperate work and those who engage in it must expect to put up with the seamy side. My dear Elfreda, why not be a good soldier? I believe you are, but you won't let yourself believe it and that is nearly your whole trouble. It may surprise you to know that you haven't finished your work with me yet."

"What do you mean?" questioned Miss Briggs, glancing up sharply at her companion.

"There is no car for me to drive to-morrow and I have been directed to escort fifty men to the base hospital at Neuilly near Paris, to the American Hospital there, you know."

Elfreda nodded.

"What has that to do with me, Loyalheart?"

"You are going with me," replied Grace smilingly.

"I am going with you? Listen to me, Grace Harlowe, should any one ask you if I am, you may with perfect safety answer, 'NO.' This pitcher has been carried to the well for the last time in this war."

Grace laughed heartily.

"Man both proposes and disposes in this war, my dear Elfreda. Man has not only pro-

posed but directed that you do go on this journey with me. It will be a perfectly safe journey unless the train should run off the track or meet with a collision or—”

“It will do both if you are on board,” interjected Elfreda. “Who says that I am to go?”

“Major Price. It seems they are short-handed at Evacuation Hospital Number One, and I, having nothing to do and needing a rest, have been directed to go to Paris with the evacuated patients. There being too many for one person to properly look after, the major directed that you accompany me.”

“Fine! I think I shall make my will to-night. I shall require two witnesses, two who have a reasonable expectation of getting back to America alive. You will not be one of them.”

“That matter undoubtedly can be arranged,” murmured Grace. “Think what a pleasant time we shall have in Paris too. We shall have ten days all to ourselves, and we shall have such a happy time there with the girls. I have wanted so much to see Yvonne and Tom. He is out now, but still under treatment. Yvonne is calling for her ‘Little Mother’ in every letter that I get. I am eager, too, to have you meet Emma Dean’s William. He is such a splendid fellow. I know you will like him, but remember, Emma has first call on him. Should she dis-

cover that he isn't the man for her, then of course there may be a chance for you."

"Grace Harlowe! How can you say such foolish things? I'll have you understand that J. Elfreda Briggs is not looking for a second-hand fiancé. What happened to your ambulance? Why did it jump out of the road in that erratic fashion?"

"I don't know—to change the subject—and you did not give me time to investigate the cause of the accident. Are you ready to turn in?"

"Yes, but I know I shall have a night-long nightmare after this night's experiences. Good night."

Elfreda tossed for a long time, then settled down to a dreamless sleep. Grace went to sleep soon after getting into bed. It was shortly after daylight on the following morning when she was aroused by low, chuckling laughter, that she cautiously opened one eye for an observation. What she saw was Miss Briggs sitting on the edge of her own cot rubbing her toes caressingly and laughing to herself immoderately, whereupon Grace's eyes opened wide.

"What's the matter, J. Elfreda?" she demanded. "Did you get shell shock from your experiences last night?"

"I was thinking about what a funny spectacle you made when you were crawling through that hole in the wall, burrowing through, or trying to and I pulling on you. You looked just like some kind of an animal." Elfreda lost herself in a paroxysm of laughter. "I remember once seeing my brother hauling a live woodchuck out of a hole in the ground. You reminded me of that incident."

"Thank you! I think I will get up now. I am glad to see that your point of view has changed after a night's sleep. Don't tell me you did not get a wink of sleep. How about it?"

"I—I don't believe I remember."

Grace bounced out of bed laughing heartily, and soon after that both girls were on their way to their mess tent, where they were the subject of many jests from their companions, all of whom had heard of their experiences of the previous night. After mess Grace reported to Major Price and asked for orders, which were to the effect that she and Miss Briggs were to proceed immediately to Number One, taking a certain number of men to Neuilly, reporting back for duty ten days hence.

"Before you go, Lieutenant Peterson, a liaison officer, wishes to speak with you. If you will wait for a few moments I will have him here."

Lieutenant Peterson's mission there was to question Grace about the occurrences of the previous night, he acting in that affair for the intelligence department. Grace told him briefly what had occurred, knowing the military values fully as well as did the man who was examining her.

"How many men would you say there were in the German patrol?" he asked after listening attentively to what she had to say.

"Perhaps twenty. I did not see all at one time. May I ask how they got through the lines? Also how and why they made their attack on ambulances?" added the Overton girl.

"These are questions that have not yet been satisfactorily answered. One driver was killed in the crash, Corporal Cavanagh."

"Oh, I'm sorry," exclaimed Grace.

"You and your friend had a most narrow escape. Had you any suspicion that their motive was to capture you, Mrs. Gray?"

"Such a thought did occur to me as a possibility," she replied thoughtfully.

"Why should the enemy wish to capture you?"

"It is quite a long story, sir, but I will be as brief as possible." Grace then told the officer of her part in the apprehension of Madame de Beaupre, an enemy agent, and her direct cap-

ture of André, one of the most dangerous spies operating for the enemy in France.

“Following those two incidents I was called upon by an officer from the French Bureau of Information in Paris and there warned that there was a price on my head. It seems that Jerry wanted me very much indeed. He captured me after that, but fortunately failed to identify me as the person he was so eager to get.”

“Have any further attempts been made to get you?”

“In the Argonne what looked like a definite attempt was made, but it may not have been to get me especially. It is more than likely that the enemy was trying to cripple our ambulance service. Last night’s work may be laid to the same cause. I do not assume to myself the importance of being singled out for attack, sir.” Grace smiled brightly. “May I ask how they wrecked us? I had no time to investigate. It was about all I could do to get away with a whole skin.”

“Strong wire was stretched across the road—a cable and wires above and below it. It did the work thoroughly, hopelessly wrecking both cars. Corporal Cavanagh was crushed underneath his car and instantly killed.”

Grace said it was some comfort to know that

he was not living and suffering when she was so close at hand and unable to help him.

"Is there anything else that you think might be of interest to us?" questioned the lieutenant.

"Nothing that I think of now. I am sorry I have not been able to do better for you," she apologized.

"On the contrary you have supplied me with much valuable military information, Mrs. Gray. I thank you. Let me suggest that you exercise great care hereafter that you are not taken."

"Mrs. Gray seldom thinks of her own well-being, Lieutenant," interjected Major Price. "She is a soldier, and a good one."

"So I have been given to understand," answered the lieutenant smilingly. "I thank you very much, and shall be able, as a result of what you have told me, to make a comprehensive report to my superiors."

"Is it permissible to ask if any of the German patrol was caught, sir?" asked Grace.

"All made their escape."

"I am sorry about that, being in hopes that at least one of them might be captured and some information wrung from him. That might have answered all your questions, sir."

The lieutenant agreed with a nod, and after shaking hands with Grace he saluted the major and left the hospital.

"At least you will be safe on this journey," declared the major, also shaking hands with Grace as she rose to go.

"One never knows, sir. Boches have a habit of appearing at most unexpected moments and in equally unexpected places. I hope we may have a safe journey because of the men we shall have with us." Grace saluted and left the office of the commanding officer of the field hospital, proceeding directly to her tent, where Miss Briggs was awaiting her.

"We are to ride in to the Evacuation Hospital and pick up our men there," she informed her companion.

A half hour later both young women were on their way toward what was destined to be another typically Harlowe adventure, to share again in the fortunes and misfortunes of war, in which both were prepared to do their full duty.

CHAPTER V

ILL LUCK FOLLOWS THE OVERTON GIRLS

“**W**HO was the fellow who was so solicitous in brushing us off when we were getting into the car?” asked Elfreda as they were whirled away on their journey to the evacuation hospital.

“Monsieur, you mean?”

“I shouldn’t dignify him by that handle. I have seen him about the field hospital since we moved there, but I never knew who or what he was. He certainly is a polite old man. These Frenchmen do know how to be polite to women,” observed Miss Briggs.

“Monsieur, as he is called at the field hospital, doesn’t happen to be French. He is a Belgian, an old fellow who does odd jobs about the place, a sort of half-witted fellow in some ways, and in others rather too knowing. His name is Ferrot. Why are you so interested?” questioned Grace.

“I’m not. His attention to us rather roused my curiosity regarding him, that’s all,” replied J. Elfreda.

"War makes strange bedfellows," reflected Grace. "I suppose there are many who think we are queer, and I am inclined to believe they are not far wrong in their estimate of us."

"Not in my case," interjected Miss Briggs. "Whatever I am, I'm not queer, I am just an average normal human being, eating and sleeping and moving about like any other sane person. Don't include me in your class, Mrs. Grace Harlowe Gray."

"No indeed, I shouldn't think of such a thing," retorted Grace laughingly. "Not, at least, after last night."

J. Elfreda did not reply, though her nose went up a little.

"Anne will be surprised to see us in Paris. I'm so glad she has her two weeks leave now, while we are to be in Paris," continued Grace. "Hasn't Anne proved herself since she has been in hospital work in France?"

"Yes, she has. But Anne always was a real woman. Next to yourself she is the finest bit of humanity I've ever known," declared Elfreda.

"Now, now! First you abuse then compliment me. Which am I to take as your real meaning?" begged Grace laughingly.

"Both."

"In other words I am, in your estimation, a

sort of No Man's Land, being nothing but a blank space between the lines. Thank you."

"You should have been a lawyer," chuckled Miss Briggs. "I defy any human being to get the better of you in an argument. Somehow you would manage to have the last word, the rebuttal, no matter which side you were on."

"Isn't it a woman's prerogative to have the last word, dear?" questioned Grace sweetly.

"Some women," agreed the young lawyeress, whereupon both girls burst out laughing.

The drive to the evacuation hospital was made very quickly despite the fact that the roads were greatly congested with men and equipment being moved up toward the front, preparatory to the great drive on Germany's "impregnable" line of defense. Arriving at the evacuation hospital the two Overton women reported to the officer in charge and were briefly instructed in what they were to do. They were to be in charge of the wounded men and to be held responsible for them. Sending a woman out in charge of evacuated soldiers was something new, he told them, but it was the opinion of the commanding officer that they might prove better in this work than if they were men.

"An orderly will accompany you and will be under your orders, Mrs. Gray," he informed her. "He will attend to keeping the cars in or-

der and perform such other duties as may be required."

"Will the men be provided with sufficient rations to see them through, sir?" questioned Grace.

"Yes. One day's rations will be sufficient. You will draw for yourselves an equal amount. The train for Paris is scheduled to leave in an hour, and the men are being put aboard now. That's all."

Grace took her orders, saluted and walked out.

"Paris to-night! If they make it they will break the record for war-time trains. If we see the French metropolis to-morrow I shall feel that we have made most excellent time," she told herself as she strolled over to the station, where she had left her companion. Grace had provided herself with sufficient rations for two days, and at her suggestion Elfreda had done the same. The two girls now repaired to the commissary and drew other rations, as directed by the commanding officer of the hospital. These they packed in their grips and carried them into the car to the small compartment that had been assigned to them.

There were two hospital cars on the train, the orderly having a bunk in the forward car of the two. After depositing their belongings Grace

and Miss Briggs went out to stroll about the village of St. Emilie, which also was the headquarters of the division commander, General O'Ryan. There would be nothing for them to do until the train started, for hospital attendants were taking care of the patients, and women nurses were passing chocolates and cigarettes to the men who were able or cared to smoke or eat chocolate.

The time for departure came and passed, but still the train did not move, and it was nearly nightfall before all hands were ordered aboard and the train crawled from the station, the two evacuation cars being coupled to an already overloaded train. The train was drawn by a real American locomotive, which encouraged the Overton women and made them almost believe that they were going to make excellent time. But alas for French railroads and war-time conditions! Five miles from St. Emilie the train came to a grinding stop and there it stuck. At nine o'clock that night it dragged out a few more weary miles, then took to a siding, where the engine left them.

During this short journey Grace and Elfreda had occupied their time in talking to the men, making them comfortable, giving a drink of water here, easing a wounded leg there, adjusting a pillow, stroking the head of a suffering

doughboy and lulling some to sleep, Grace with a low-pitched lullaby which she sang as a mother sings to her child.

"Keep it up, sister," called a soldier. "I was dreaming that I was in heaven. When you stopped you woke me up."

"People ordinarily wake up when I begin, not when I stop," retorted the Overton girl just loudly enough for him to hear. She did not wish to disturb the other sleepers, but the laugh that followed from those who had not gone to sleep awakened all the others.

"Now you have done it, Buddy!" she chided. "Will you children please go to sleep while the train is not running?"

"French trains never run," observed a deep voice from the far end of the car. "They belong to the creeping, crawling things of earth."

Grace laughed heartily, and then sharply ordered the men to make an effort to go to sleep.

"If anything is wanted push the button over your berth and one of us will be with you instantly. We must get some sleep, but we shall not go to our room until every mother's son of you is sound asleep. I'll sing one more song and that will be the end of my vocal exercising for to-night."

No one spoke. She did not give them time to do so, for Grace was crooning a lullaby again,

Elfreda, sitting on the edge of a berth holding the hand of a suffering man, gazing soulfully at Grace. The lullaby was strung out for the better part of an hour. Grace then paused and tiptoed to the other end of the car and back, then placed a finger on her lips.

"All is well, Elfreda," she whispered. "Turn in. I must look up the orderly and give him my orders."

Grace went to the other car and found the men restless there, so she sang to them, and it was long after midnight before she found an opportunity to go to her own berth. She left orders with the orderly to make a tour of the cars every thirty minutes, but to be cautious not to awaken the men.

"Call me the moment anything is not moving right," she directed.

"The train isn't moving right," retorted the man. "I beg your pardon, Miss," he added as he observed the glint of disapproval in her eyes. "It was very fresh of me, but I didn't mean it that way."

"I know that," replied Grace smiling sweetly. "Good night."

Both girls lay down on their bunks without having removed their clothing, for it would not be convenient to go out in wrappers should there be a call from a patient. Grace told El-

freda that it might be advisable, if they were on the road another night, for them to take turns on night watch. She said she did not like the idea of leaving the care of the men to the orderly. So much concerned was she over his care of the patients, that two hours after she had turned in Grace got up and walked through her own car, then forward into the second car. She nearly fell over a man asleep on the floor at the end of the car. It was the orderly.

Grace shook him and beckoned to him to follow her.

"How long have you been asleep?" she demanded when they had reached the corridor.

"I don't know, Miss. I think it must have been a long time. I haven't any apology to make, but it was this way. I sat down in the only place I could find where I could get my back against something, and that's about the last thing I remember till you woke me up. I'm sorry. It won't happen again. I deserve to be called down."

"Did you sleep last night?"

"I haven't had any sleep in three nights—that's what made me drop off to-night."

"There is an empty berth in the rear car. You get right in there and go to sleep. I will call you early in the morning and finish my sleep after you get up," she directed.

“I beg pardon, Miss—”

“Mrs. Gray,” corrected Grace. “It’s all right, however. You do as I tell you, and be careful that you do not waken any of the men. They are having a fine night’s rest.”

The orderly obeyed the order with reluctance, though his admiration for his woman commander went up several degrees.

Grace sat the rest of the night through, occupying the place on the floor that the orderly had used for his nap. She called him at five in the morning after her last round for the night. The air was heavy in the cars, heavy from lack of circulation, and pungent from the odor of antiseptics. For the next three hours Grace slept soundly. When she awakened Elfreda was missing, the latter having gone out quietly without awakening her companion.

The train was running, or rather it was under motion, and Grace smiled at the recollection of the doughboy’s remark regarding French trains. At ten o’clock they stopped at a small town where there was a “Y” canteen presided over by a woman, from whom out of her own pocket the Overton girl bought cigarettes, chocolates and some canned goods for her charges, taking all that the woman could spare. That reduced her ready money to a single franc piece, which condition did not alarm Grace, for

she had a substantial bank account in Paris from which she could draw when she arrived there.

The next jaunt of ten miles was done in an hour and a half. Once more their train was side-tracked to permit the passage of supply trains on their way to the front, and there they lay all day long and up until after midnight, when another start was made.

The train stopped, lay for a long time, then began backing.

"We are on a side-track again," announced Grace to her companion, who had just finished her watch. "I suppose this means another wait of several hours. Are we at a station?"

"I think we are near one. I saw a settlement just ahead of us when the train slowed down. No lights are showing."

"Of course not. Go to sleep, dear. Are the men resting well?"

"Yes. You have made a great hit with those poor maimed fellows, Loyalheart. One of them said that were you to die and go to heaven, you would 'put it over the angels up there like a pup-tent.' Did you ever hear anything so perfectly ridiculous?"

Grace laughed heartily.

"Isn't that just like a Yankee doughboy? They are soldiers and men first, and the most

original of all human beings next. 'Good night!'"

Grace stepped out to make her tour of inspection. Elfreda had left an outside door open and a cool refreshing breeze was now circulating through the car. Most of the men were sleeping soundly, only now and then did she hear anything like a moan. In the car ahead the orderly was on the job, awake and alert. He saluted as she entered, which Grace returned in kind.

"Men sleeping all right?" she inquired.

"Yes, Mrs. Gray, but we shall never get them through at this rate. Dressings will have to be changed on some of them to-morrow morning. What shall we do about it?"

"I'll talk with you about that in the morning. If there is any probability of our reaching Paris by night it will be better to let them wait. Otherwise we shall have to do the changing ourselves."

Blam! Cr-a-a-a-s-h! Bang! Bang!

The car shook and rocked on its wheels.

"Long range artillery!" cried the orderly.

"No, bombs!" answered Grace briefly. "Stick to your men. Don't let them get up. Joke with them if you can and keep them occupied. I must get back to the other car."

Grace ran in, bumping into Elfreda, who,

with her hair down about her shoulders, her face pale, was just emerging from their state-room.

"Are we hit?" cried Miss Briggs.

"Neither of our cars is. I think the train has been struck somewhere up forward."

"Oh this is terrible! I knew it, I knew it!"

Grace placed a firm grip on her companion's arm.

"Remember, Elfreda, we have wounded soldiers here. They are getting excited already, so we must be calm and smiling and act as if there were nothing to fear. Can you do it?"

"I will do it, Grace. You may depend upon me."

"Good! Let's go! You take the other car and I will remain here. If anything happens and you are able to move or speak, remember the men must have first consideration. Beyond that you and I don't count."

"I understand," responded Miss Briggs, nodding.

"See that the orderly does his duty, and for goodness sake get some color in those cheeks. You look ghastly."

Elfreda hurried away to the forward car of their outfit, Grace then walking down the aisle passing out cigarettes to the men, most of whom lay rigidly waiting for the next explosion.

"This is Jerry's busy night, Buddies, but don't let that worry you. If he hits us we're hit; if he doesn't we aren't. That is good logic, isn't it?"

"You bet it is, Little Sunshine," spoke up a doughboy.

Grace stepped over and peered down into the face of the speaker.

"Buddy, where did you get that name?"

"I was in the hospital at Neuilly when you were there a long time ago."

"And you went back to the lines and got it again? You poor baby!"

Ripples of laughter ran up and down the car, which was exactly what Grace hoped would occur.

"I'm sorry. What shall I do to entertain you while the concert is going on outside, Buddies? You know we don't wish to let Jerry have the performance all to himself."

"Sing!" they shouted.

"Join in the chorus, you who can, but don't strain yourselves. You don't have to sing loud, you know, just hum. 'Oh say can you see—'"

Every wounded man in the car was humming the refrain before she had finished the first line of the American anthem. Grace swayed her body as she sang, to mark time for them, singing in a clear high soprano, accompanied by a

rich chorus of hums that went straight to the heart of the Overton girl. Two bombs exploded near by, but the singing and the humming continued without a visible tremor anywhere down the line or in her own voice.

Ba-a-a-a-n-g! Crash!

Grace staggered, but grabbed a berth stanchion to save herself from falling over on a wounded man. She knew that the car ahead had been hit because she felt it wrenched from its couplings. A few seconds of hesitation and once more the song was resumed, the chorus, a little unsteady at first, soon growing in volume and rolling out strong and resonant.

It stopped suddenly.

The floor of the car seemed to rise up under the Overton girl's feet. Breaking woodwork, the sound of shattering glass and the grind of metal against metal were the terrifying sounds that smote her ears.

"St-e-a-d-y! St-e-a-d-y, Buddies!" she urged as she felt the car going over. "Hold fast!" Her voice sounded weak and puny in the crashing and rending, then over they went, a new sound resounding through the hospital car.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRECK OF THE "LIMITED"

MEN racked and torn cried out in alarm and pain, but Grace could not help them. She had been hurled to the floor and under a berth, leaving her dazed and partly unconscious.

One side of the car had been partially blown in by the explosion of an aerial bomb, and the other side was broken in when, in falling over, it struck the rocky edge of the road bed and slid down the embankment to the bottom, where part of the roof gave way.

The car was a mass of wreckage, a tangle of iron rods and broken woodwork. The forward car had not gone all the way over, but hung trembling on the edge of the embankment, threatening every moment to topple over. There was silence in the wrecked rear car for a moment, then shouts of alarm and cries of pain rose from those of the wounded who were still able to raise their voices.

Grace Harlowe heard those cries faintly, and the sound of them aroused her, stirred her,

brought home to her the realization of a duty to be done. She struggled to free herself from the weight of the berth that was pressing her down. To move hurt her and gave her pain, but she worked until she had freed her arms and obtained a grip with her hands on the edge of the berth. A moment later and she was free.

The car was in utter darkness. Grace lay breathing heavily, trying to more fully collect herself, then drew herself up and found she was standing on the side of the car looking out through the broken roof.

“Buddies, are you all right?” she shouted.

“No, we’re all dead,” answered a calm voice after a few seconds of silence.

Grace drew her pocket flash lamp and cast its rays about her. It did not seem possible that a human being could have come through alive in that tangled mass of wreckage. The man in the berth over her, or who had occupied the berth under which she had fallen, lay almost at her feet.

“I’ll get you all out as soon as possible,” shouted the Overton girl. “Don’t try to help yourselves. If any of you are pinned down I’ll help those first.”

Not a voice answered her, though Grace well knew that some were in that predicament.

First she worked at the broken roof, tugged

at jagged pieces of galvanized iron that had covered it and turned the pieces back until an exit was free down almost to the edge at that point. Through this she dragged the soldier who had occupied the berth above her, and laid him on the ground a few yards from the car.

Straightening up she blew several long, trilling blasts on the sergeant's whistle that she always carried, knowing that if there were any unwounded soldiers within sound of it they would respond. She could hear some one chopping in the forward car that she could plainly see lying on its side up above her.

Crawling back into the car, she turned on her light and found another soldier. This one was pinned down under a piece of roofing and it required all her strength and repeated efforts to free him. He was conscious and, in reply to her inquiry, bravely declared that he wasn't much hurt. Grace thought she knew better. She dragged him out also.

The next man was unconscious or dead, she was unable to decide which, but could not afford to take the time to find out. The important thing to be done was to get the men out as quickly as possible. One by one, exerting herself to the utmost, her clothing torn, Grace Harlowe Gray dragged the men out into the open and placed them on the ground.

They were nearly all out when a trainman came down to her assistance. It was fortunate that he did, for one of the last two of her patients was so firmly pinned down by the wreckage that she could not budge the mass of material that held him. Her own strength was failing her and she was beginning to feel weak and dizzy. For a brief few minutes Grace permitted herself to lie down on the ground, then she was up and at her work.

"Give them water. Here's my canteen. I'll be right back."

Grace crawled back into the car and found her way to her stateroom. The door was jammed so that she could not open it. She smashed it in with a piece of broken timber and crept in on all fours. The stateroom was a wreck too, and it took her some time to find her supply of first aid bandages and antiseptics. Finding them she got out as quickly as possible, gathering up a canteen and a couple of blankets as she went.

"Go in and get more blankets. Hurry! The men mustn't lie on the ground. Is any of them gone?"

"One," answered the trainman. "Couple more badly injured."

"Anybody killed forward?"

"Conductor and a trainman. No soldiers on

board except these and the fellows in the other car. This is a supply train." At Grace's bidding the trainman led her to the more seriously wounded, to whom she gave first aid. All, save three, had by this time regained consciousness.

"Hurry now and fetch the blankets," she urged. "Where are the engineer and the fireman?"

"Helping in the other car."

"Good. Was—was Miss Briggs hurt?"

"You mean the woman up there?" pointing to the car poised on the edge of the embankment.

"Yes."

"I don't think so. She's blowing off steam like an overloaded boiler and threatening the engine crew with a club because they aren't working fast enough," answered the trainman, who then hurried over to the rear wrecked car and began carrying out blankets and piling them on the ground.

"Good old Elfreda!" murmured Grace. "I knew she would find herself when face to face with an emergency such as this." Grace, happy at thought of Elfreda's strength, spread out blankets and mattresses which the trainman was now throwing out, and called to him to come and help her lift the men onto them. Over each mattress a blanket was placed; on

this a wounded man was placed and over him another blanket was stretched. It was a wonderful relief to those suffering doughboys.

"Please go to Miss Briggs and suggest that she make her patients comfortable in the same way, please," directed the Overton girl. "Assist her if she needs you, otherwise I shall be glad to have you here."

Grace now devoted her attention wholly to the men, stroking their heads, talking soothingly to them and calming them, for the nerves of most were shattered after their fearful experience. She was interrupted by the return of the trainman.

"Well?" questioned Grace.

"The woman says she doesn't need me. Says she has too many men already and that they are doing nothing but getting in each other's way."

Grace laughed.

"How near is the station?" she questioned.

"Five hundred yards or so."

"Is it open?"

"No. It won't open until seven in the morning."

"I am of a different opinion. Is there a telegraph office there?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Good! You go find the station agent and fetch him to the station even if you have to

drag him by the neck. These men must be got under cover, for it is threatening rain. How long is it going to take to clear away the wreck and get the line open?" she demanded.

"If we get away from here to-day we shall be in luck," was the encouraging reply.

"That is what I thought. Please go now, but don't you come back without the station agent. Please tell Miss Briggs what my plan is, for I can't leave my patients."

"I'll fetch him, never fear. If he's a Frenchman I sure will have to drag him, but if he is an American he will come without any urging."

By the time the trainman returned Grace had most of her men asleep and was sitting on the ground nibbling at a piece of hardtack.

"What luck?" she called softly.

"Frenchie! Had to drag him out. Sorry, Miss, but I had to punch his head to make him see the thing in the right light. You understand, these Frenchmen are not up to the Yankee way of doing things when things are ready to be done."

"I hope you didn't hurt him," she replied, chuckling under her breath. "See if you can find the stretchers in the car. Here is my lamp. If the stretchers are broken we shall have to fix one, for we can't get the men away in any other manner without hurting them."

One stretcher was the result of the search, and on this they placed the most seriously wounded man of the lot. Grace took one end of it, the trainman the other, and the two toiled up the bank with their burden. Placing their burden on the station platform they went back for mattresses and blankets. These were placed in the station, the wounded American laid on one, and then Grace and the trainman returned to the wreck with their stretcher for another patient.

By this time Elfreda's men were carrying their wounded over. Grace directed that the orderly go down with her trainman while the engineer and fireman carried the stretcher with the wounded from Elfreda's car. Grace remained at the station long enough to instruct the station agent how to dispose of the men. She observed that he had a black eye. He was surly, and she did not so much blame him, for the Yankee trainman plainly had not handled the man with gentleness. The Overton girl then returned to her patients at the foot of the embankment, where she remained until the last of the wounded men had been evacuated to the station. The unfortunate victim she covered with her own hands after murmuring a silent prayer over him.

"Poor Buddy," she said turning away, her

eyes filled with tears, to take up the duties that were awaiting her attention.

The station floor being filled, Grace ordered the agent to open the baggage and freight room, which he did complainingly.

"Were you hurt?" she demanded as she and Elfreda came face to face in the station after all had been made secure.

"I was killed—almost."

"Did you lose any men?"

"No. One is so badly hurt that he may not recover, poor chap. Wasn't it terrible?"

Grace nodded.

"Elfreda, we shall probably be here all day. Our food is spoiled, we have nothing for the men, so it will be up to us to forage for something for them."

"I will do anything whatever that you say, Loyalheart."

"Thank you. At daybreak we will go out, taking two of the men with us. We will leave the orderly here to look after the wounded. I wish I had some money with me."

"I have a hundred francs. Will that help you out?"

"Elfreda, you are a jewel. Help me out? Why, it's a fortune. We can almost buy out the town for that—provided there is anything to buy," she added a little doubtfully. "Twenty

dollars will go a long way with these poor peasants. I'll speak with the agent."

Grace went over to the window and, engaging the agent in conversation, learned where the owners of the food shops lived, their names, and those of some of the better class of householders. After thanking him for the information she slipped ten francs through the ticket window to him and smiled sweetly. For the first time since being dragged from his bed by the Yankee trainman, the agent grinned and began to chatter and gesticulate.

Grace asked him if the wreck had been reported. He said it had not.

"Then do so at once!" she commanded. "How are we to get help unless they know we need it? Where do they think we are?"

The agent said of course they did not know, that the trains on both sides of them, fifteen or twenty miles away, were held by the block signals and would stay where they were until the line was clear.

"Fine railroading! Did you ever hear of anything quite so impossible?" complained Grace turning to her companion. "Orderly, I think you had better search the cars for the mess kits. We shall need them. At daylight you will please report here to look after the men while we forage. Tired out, aren't you?"

"I reckon I can stand it if you can," he grinned. "I'm used to these French railroads and their 'limited' trains—limited as to speed, you know."

A pile of mess kits lay on the platform when the first dull streaks of day appeared in the clouds, but these were taken in when a fine drizzling cold rain began to fall. Grace Harlowe was thankful that she had been able to get the wounded men under cover in time, knowing that the exposure would have killed some of them, as the train had been so wrecked that not a habitable car, freight or otherwise, remained. Only the engine had not been damaged, but that was off the tracks. It was a hopeless situation from any point of view.

"Harlowe luck," observed Elfreda sourly. "I knew it, but really I am congratulating myself."

"On what?" asked Grace smiling good naturedly.

"Coming through it alive. When I left the field hospital for this journey I was fully convinced that I should never reach Paris alive. I am really disappointed."

"Cheer up," comforted Grace. "You aren't in Paris yet. We will now get our force together and take the town—the food portion of it."

Calling the engineer and fireman, Grace and Elfreda set out through the rain in search of food. Some of the villagers were still in bed, so these were left until later. The Overton girls bought and paid for all the food that they considered it wise to take from the stores; then visited the homes for milk and eggs and for cooking utensils. They found the villagers glad to serve them. The villagers had not heard that there had been a wreck and began hurrying to the railroad, where they stood gaping at the scenes, but were not permitted to enter the station.

"I should like to know how you are going to cook all this stuff," observed Elfreda when they were on their way back to the station. "I do not suppose you have thought of that."

"Oh, yes, I have, my dear. My stove is ready now. I'll show it to you in a few minutes." Reaching the station Grace led the way down the tracks to the place where the locomotive stood leaning over, a faint curl of smoke rising from its stack.

"There's the stove," announced Grace, pointing to the locomotive. "In its firebox we shall cook the breakfasts for our Buddies."

CHAPTER VII

THE GOAL IS REACHED

“**C**OOK our breakfast in a locomotive?” exclaimed J. Elfreda.
“Yes. Why not?”

“That goes further than anything I ever heard of. Loyalheart, you surely are a wonder. I actually believe that were you to be turned out to pasture in the middle of the Sahara Desert you would find some way to provide food for yourself.”

“One should have plenty of sand,” said Grace. “Orderly, have the agent give you a table. Put it in the freight house for a serving table, but don’t tell the boys what we propose to do. I wish to surprise them. Don’t be rough with the agent, for I have him in good humor and prefer to keep him that way. Mr. Engineer, have you any implements by use of which I can place the food over that bed of coals without crawling in and setting myself on fire?”

“Hang your cooking things on the poker and the fireman will hold it over the coals. I will hold another poker if necessary.”

“Fine! That overcomes the difficulty. I am in such a ragged condition that I should catch fire easily. Elfreda, you too are a sight.”

J. Elfreda shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

“The police will lock us up anyway the instant we step foot in Paris, but nothing that they can do will in the least disturb me. I’m past all that,” declared Miss Briggs.

“Never mind, cut the bacon. Make the slices thin. The coffee is ready to put over. I think this large pot will suffice for about half of the men. It is all I can do to lift it. I wonder what the natives do with such a coffee pot?”

Elfreda suggested that perhaps the housewives used it to bathe the children in.

“I know an infantry company that cooked their Sunday dinner recently in an iron kettle that was used by a peasant family as the family bath tub. It was one of those huge affairs that are used in the states at hog-killing time,” she added.

“Omit the details, Elfreda. I’ll take your word for it that the proceeding was a little irregular. Pass up the plates, and as fast as they are filled you will run in with them, Orderly. Come right back for more. I shall have to remain here to do the cooking. Elfreda, you had better go along and pour the coffee. Tell the

fellows to be patient, that I haven't quite gotten used to the stove yet, and that the draft is so strong some of the eggs have been sucked up the chimney. Make them laugh, it will give them an appetite."

"Doughboy appetites need no stimulating," retorted Elfreda.

"Ours are sick men, remember."

"Makes no difference. There isn't any such thing as a live doughboy without an appetite. All ready."

Men smacked their lips as the aroma of coffee was borne to their nostrils, but when the savory odor of bacon and eggs reached them there were yells of delight, some strong, others weak but no less enthusiastic.

"This isn't France, it's Heaven!" groaned a doughboy. "I'm dead and don't know it."

"All right, Buddy, I will give your mess to some one else."

"What! Hand that over here!" he commanded, raising himself on one elbow.

Men's eyes were wide open. It was difficult for them to believe what their eyes and noses told them—that here were real food and hot drinks.

"You may thank 'Captain' Grace Gray for this, young men," Elfreda informed them. "She foraged the town and paid for the stuff



"Pass Up the Plates."

out of her own pocket." Elfreda did not say that it was with her money instead of Grace's that the food had been purchased.

"The 'Captain' is up in the locomotive now cooking some more for you. She says you are not to overload your stomachs, but that she wishes you to have what you need. We shall probably have to remain here all day, and there isn't much more food left in the town, so be as prudent as you can and still be happy."

The way those boys, some of them badly wounded, did eat! Miss Briggs opened her eyes in amazement, as helping after helping was brought over by the orderly and the trainman, while Grace and the engine crew cooked coffee in the firebox of the locomotive.

"Three helpings," announced Grace finally. "Tell them we must save the rest for later in the day," was the word "Captain" Grace sent to her companion. "Shall we cook a bite for ourselves now?" she asked turning to the engine crew.

They were willing to eat, but said they would help themselves from their own dinner pails, and take a little of the coffee that Grace had brought.

"Thank you! That's the real American spirit. I am going to make my breakfast on my iron rations, principally hardtack. Orderly,

please take this plate of food to Miss Briggs. Then come back and have your breakfast. My back is nearly broken." Grace sank down on a pile of coal, whereupon the engineer picked her up and placed her on the fireman's seat. "I directed the agent to telegraph a report of the accident."

"Yes, he told me so when I went over to report," replied the engineer. "We ought to have a wrecking crew in here by noon, but the road is so congested that it may take hours longer. I hope you will be able to feed the men until we can get started. The water is getting so low in the boiler that we shall soon be obliged to pull the fire. What will you do then about cooking?"

"Cook in the stove in the station, provided there is anything to cook," replied Grace quickly.

"Yes, but the wood. Wood is a scarce article in France. I'll warrant you won't find enough of it in the village to cook a meal. The peasants are out now trying to pick up enough in the woods and the fields to last them through the day. How can you do that?"

"I don't intend to. We have several husky men here and the station is made of wood. If we can get the food I'll risk getting the wood. I'll tear down the railroad station if necessary

and use it for firewood. You have been very kind and I appreciate it. I shall mention your helpfulness in my report."

"I reckon they can't stop you," sighed the engineer.

"Not when the lives of American soldiers are in the balance," she made reply, getting down and starting for the station.

Grace was greeted with yells when she appeared in the station, and a doughboy began to sing, "We're just wild over her, we're just wild over her," which others took up in different keys.

"You won't be in a few moments, for we are about to dress your wounds, Buddies, and that may hurt you a little."

The song gave place to long-drawn groans.

"Orderly, if you will fetch water, I shall be obliged. The agent has a pail. I shall need quite a lot of it. Sorry to work you so hard, but it can't be helped."

"You needn't be. I'll run my legs off for the likes of you," returned the orderly.

Dressing the wounds was not accomplished quickly with nearly fifty men to serve and only two women to do the actual dressing.

Sufficient material, in the shape of bandages, towels and other material, had been salvaged from the wrecked cars to enable them to ac-

comply with their task. Antiseptics in tablet form were used in the water, and the utmost care taken that the wounds were not infected. It was a trying ordeal for two girls, but Elfreda had seen so much suffering in the hospitals, and Grace had been so much in contact with all forms of human misery for so long, that they were able to go through their task with steady nerves and hands that never trembled or fumbled.

It was noon when they finally finished their work, and time for luncheon. Grace decided that the men should lunch on their hardtack, which they might soak in coffee if they wished. As the engineer had said, there was no wood to be had for the station stove, so Grace began looking about for something to tear down. She decided upon a platform at the back of the freight and express room, a platform that wagons backed against to be loaded. This, at her direction, the trainman and the fireman attacked with axes and cut up sufficient wood for at least two meals.

The patients were not very hungry, but they enjoyed their coffee with milk and sugar in it, and the hardtack, soaked in the coffee, took on a real flavor, which it entirely lacked in its dry state. In the meantime the rain had assumed a steady downpour and the heat from the stove

was found to be most comforting to both patients and attendants.

"Any word of the wrecking train?" she inquired after the engineer turned away from the window, where he had been speaking with the agent.

"Doubtful if they get a wrecking train through to-day," he informed her. "Even if they do we shan't get out of here before morning. This is a one-track road, you see. All we can do is sit down and wait. We can't hurry the powers that be."

Grace reflected briefly.

"I am of the opinion that we can. At least I shall try, though I may be called down for an impertinence."

"Grace, what is it you propose to do?" demanded Miss Briggs.

"Wait, I'll show you." Grace wrote a message, penning it in French, which she knew would serve to get it through without being garbled by operators who knew no English, or who perhaps thought they did. She handed it to her companion, and J. Elfreda uttered an exclamation when she read the following message:

"To the Commander-in-Chief, A. E. F., Paris.

"Fifty evacuated men from Number One in

wreck at X. One killed. Important we have right of way to get the men to Neuilly or have medical attention at once. Men must be attended to or several will die. Am cooking and feeding. Food purchased from villagers. Impossible to get enough to last over to-day.

“(Signed) Grace Harlowe Gray,

“In Charge Evacuation Party.”

“Surely, Grace, you aren’t going to send that telegram?” protested Miss Briggs.

“I certainly shall send it.”

“You will be court-martialed for impudence to the highest American officer in France.”

Grace shrugged her shoulders.

“I can’t help that. The need is urgent. If I should be court-martialed because I have tried to save American soldiers from dying I shall be sorry I am an American, that’s all. Operator, send this telegram at once. Tell them to rush it. How much will it cost me?”

She paid the fee and turned to her companion.

“In view of the fact that the message has been paid for with your money, I am inclined to believe that you will be found equally guilty with me, my dear Elfreda,” declared “Captain” Grace teasingly.

“I am. As a lawyer I admit it. Remember

what I tell you. You will soon hear something drop," warned J. Elfreda.

"I hope to," was the enigmatic reply. "I think I shall lie down for forty winks. Better come along. We will then give the orderly an opportunity to rest."

Elfreda shook her head, so Grace rolled up in a blanket, and, with her gas mask for a pillow, curled up on the station floor and went to sleep in a moment. Miss Briggs sat down with her back against the wall, and without realizing it, she also dropped off to sleep. The orderly gently drew a blanket about her and tiptoed into the freight room.

It was just at dusk when a familiar humming sound in the air awakened Grace Harlowe. She was wide awake and alert on the instant. The station was quiet save for the snores of the men and the rather heavy breathing of her companion, who was still sleeping soundly.

Grace threw off her blanket and stepped to the door. A huge bird was descending from the skies, circling and spiralling down over the little French hamlet. The bird proved to be an American plane, as the Overton girl soon discovered from its markings.

Shaking Elfreda awake, "Captain" Grace informed her that an American airplane was coming down on them; whereupon Elfreda

bounced up, rubbing her eyes, and ran out to the platform. The airplane landed in an open lot not fifty yards from the station, and two men got out. One hurried over to the station.

"Are you Mrs. Grace Gray?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," replied Grace saluting, she having recognized that he was an officer.

"I am Major Cobb of the Medical Department. Headquarters ordered me to proceed here by airplane, stating that you need assistance. This looks like it," he said, waving a hand toward the wrecked train.

"Yes, sir," answered Grace, stealing a mischievous glance at J. Elfreda Briggs, who was gazing at the major and "Captain" Grace, a puzzled expression on her face.

CHAPTER VIII

GRACE ATTAINS HER OBJECTIVE

“**S**END some one to the plane for my supplies. Fetch them first, then get the rations I have brought,” he ordered crisply, altogether too crisply, Miss Briggs thought, considering the circumstances.

“Very good, sir. Orderly!”

The orderly reported promptly, stiffened and saluted.

“Conduct Major Cobb to the patients. I will join you when I have given the necessary directions for getting out the supplies.”

The orderly led the way to the station, the medical officer taking in the scene there with alert, understanding eyes.

“Who had these men brought in here?”

“Mrs. Gray, sir.”

“Had anything to eat?”

“Yes, sir, at noon to-day.”

“Where’d they get it?”

“Mrs. Gray foraged through the village and bought it, then cooked it in the locomotive fire-box, sir.”

“Humph! Where are the worst cases?”

“In the freight house, sir.”

The officer lost no time in going to the half dozen men who were in what Grace considered to be a serious condition. He examined them and removed the dressing from the wounds of one.

“When were these dressings done?”

“This morning, sir,” replied the orderly.

“Who did them?”

“Mrs. Gray and Miss Briggs. They dressed all the men’s wounds after breakfast.”

“Are they nurses, Orderly?”

“I believe not, sir. Mrs. Gray, I understand, is an ambulance driver who has been in front line work for some time. Miss Briggs is an attendant, not a trained nurse, at a field hospital. She is a woman lawyer, I am told.”

“Humph! They know how to dress a wound,” observed the major to himself. “Could not have done it better myself. Could teach some of those young surgeons of my section—Orderly!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Fetch a pail of water!”

The officer began dressing a wound, giving it rapid but careful professional attention. In the meantime Grace had gone out to the airplane with her assistants, herself carrying in the

medical supplies and suggesting to the pilot that he come in out of the rain.

“You will not be able to fly back to-night in all probability and—”

“The major intends to return to-night, I believe. Many hurt in the wreck?”

“All of them. Only one fatality, I am thankful to say,” replied Grace. Reaching the station she carried the medical supplies, including dressings and medicines, into the freight house and put them down. The major was at work over the second case, but she did not go near him, not considering that it was expected of her.

“You won, Loyalheart,” said Elfreda, who had halted just to the rear of her companion. “Your telegram resulted in quick action. I congratulate you.”

“So do I congratulate you,” smiled Grace.

“On what?”

“On being such a fine prophetess. Your prophecy was that something would drop. Something did drop—it was an airplane and it brought us what we so much needed, surgical assistance, food and medicines. Were I in your place I should hang out a sign in the form of an open book, on the title page of which I should have printed, ‘Professor Briggs, who for twenty francs will open the book of your past, present and future.’ ”

“How foolish! The major is beckoning.”

Grace stepped over to him.

“The first man’s condition is not favorable,” he informed her. “If he awakens and is in pain give him half of one of these tablets every hour until he goes to sleep, but do not awaken him to take the dose. Four others are in poor condition, but may pull through. I have numbered them from one to four in the order in which they lie, to correspond with directions written on this slip, which will guide you in giving them their medicine. Have the supplies been removed from the plane?”

“Yes, sir. Shall you look over the others?”

“Yes.” He did so, here and there removing a bandage to examine a wound, but quickly replacing the bandage with that now familiar “humph!” The officer went down the line, working with great rapidity, but apparently neglecting nothing that should have been done.

“Get coffee,” whispered Grace as Elfreda passed them. “The major and the pilot will need it, as they are returning to-night.”

Elfreda hurried away. While she prepared the coffee the trainman started a fire in the station stove, and, by the time Major Cobb had completed his work, the coffee was ready.

“I have done all I can for them,” he said tersely. “Some may die on your hands, but I

do not believe more than one will. If we had him where he could have attention we might pull him through. He must be carefully watched so that restoratives may be administered and the heart action stimulated if need."

"I will sit with him all night, sir. He shall have all the attention that an inexperienced nurse is able to give him. We have taken the liberty to make some coffee for you. Have I your permission to ask your pilot to come in?"

The major's face brightened.

"That was fine of you. Certainly, ask the pilot in. A hot cup of coffee will do us both a world of good. It's going to be a trying drive back to our station."

Grace excused herself and sent the trainman for the pilot. In the meantime Grace had poured the coffee and the major was fairly gulping it down. She offered him some hardtack and a can of corned beef. He accepted the hardtack, but declined the canned stuff.

"Come in, Sergeant," he called, observing his pilot standing just outside of the station door. "Here's the makings of warmth for us for our journey. The men seem pretty well content here, and I don't know that I blame them. Were either of you injured in the wreck?"

"Merely shaken up, sir," answered Grace. "It was tough on the men, though. May I ask

what are the prospects of our getting through?"

"Not very good. You will not get away to-night. On the way out I observed that the line was congested with stalled trains. It didn't look as though they ever would get the tracks clear. Some of those trains will have to back up all the way to Paris. There are not sidings enough to hold them. I think the rations we brought will be sufficient for another day. By that time you should be on your way."

Grace expressed the hope that assistance might come soon.

"How did you get word out? The orders came from headquarters and were very insistent."

"I telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief." Grace flushed a little as she told him.

The major gazed at her inquiringly, then laughed outright.

"Young woman, I will say that you have nerve. I congratulate you. No man could have done better. I doubt if a man could have obtained such quick action from headquarters. Your work here has been of a high order. You no doubt have saved the lives of several of the patients, and in my report to my superior I shall give you the credit that you deserve. Sergeant, are you ready?"

"Yes, sir."

The major extended an impulsive hand, first shaking hands with Grace, then with Elfreda Briggs. He then saluted and strode out followed by his pilot. Grace sent the orderly and the trainmen to help the fliers to take off.

Grace told Miss Briggs what the officer had said about their worst case and said she would sit with the wounded man through the night. Elfreda urged that she be permitted to take her watch, but Grace shook her head, declaring that the responsibility being hers she must do the actual work in this instance.

“Should I need assistance I will send for you. The man is sleeping now, so we might as well sit down and chat. The agent says we are to use his office freely and to make it our sleeping place. I have the key. He has gone for the night.” After instructing the orderly to watch the patient, the two overworked Overton girls went to the agent’s office and sat down in the two comfortable chairs that the place contained. The rain was pouring down on the roof, but the swinging lamp made the office warm and cheerful.

It was the first time they had enjoyed such comfort since leaving their station at the front. Elfreda asked if Grace’s husband knew that she was coming to Paris.

“No. Not knowing how long the trip might

take, I thought best not to tell him, knowing that, were we to be detained, he would stew and imagine all sorts of things had happened to us. You don't know how happy I shall be to have Tom and darling little Yvonne with me. It seems strange to think that I shall see my daughter. Think of it, Elfreda."

"I do think of it, and I am not exaggerating when I say that I shall be as happy as you to see her. I wish she belonged to me—that is, I wish you could find another one just like her and give her to me—not Yvonne, but the new find, I mean."

The girls chatted until midnight, when Grace got up to resume her watch, directing Elfreda to turn in. The orderly she sent to bed and then she made a quiet trip about her two wards, observing the patients critically. The remaining members of the train crew were asleep at one end of the freight house on blankets that had been provided by Grace. They had proved themselves to be good fellows, each one of them, and the Overton girl reflected that an American, no matter what his garb or station in life might be, ordinarily was a man to be depended upon in an emergency.

Along toward morning her patient had a bad spell. She worked over him coolly, but fearful of the result. To her great relief his heart ac-

tion improved and he began breathing naturally a few moments after she had administered the heart stimulant. After that she did not leave him for a single moment during all the rest of the night. When morning came she sent for Elfreda and, rolling up in a blanket on the floor of the freight house, went to sleep, after leaving instructions that she was to be called at seven to get breakfast for the men.

When Grace was called, breakfast was ready. J. Elfreda had stolen a march on her and was already serving the doughboys. The serious case, much to "Captain" Grace's relief, showed marked improvement and greeted her with a smile that went straight to her heart. Perhaps he knew that she had saved his heart from ceasing its beats during the night.

The morning was cool and rainy, and the fire was kept going in the station stove all the forenoon, the train crew making frequent attacks on the rear platform.

After breakfast the men were bathed, but, save in half a dozen instances, no bandages were removed, the surgeon having told the girls that it would not be necessary that day. This was a relief, the redressing and rebandaging being a trying task.

Later in the day the agent informed her that a train was expected to get through early in the

evening, and that sometime during the night the men would be evacuated. This meant that the night's rest of the wounded soldiers would have to be broken, which "Captain" Grace did not look upon with approval. However, it was not for her to express disapproval, for this would come as an official order.

Before dark engineers and workmen were on the job relaying the track. Soon the wrecking car was pushed in, the damaged cars were lifted off and tumbled down the bank; the track was put in order, and a train rolled through on its way toward the front.

A procession of trains followed it, all moving slowly. This procession continued until midnight, when a train halted at the station and shifted two cars to the siding. They were the cars for the wounded men, but carried neither stretcher-bearers nor surgeons. There were orders, however, for Grace, directing her to load the men aboard as quickly as possible and be ready to be coupled to a westbound train.

"I don't believe we shall be hauled out before to-morrow, but orders are orders so we might as well get the job done," announced Grace. "Orderly, awaken the train crew, and ask them to help us get the patients aboard."

The patients grumbled, but the train crew got up smilingly and began their work. Grace and

Elfreda carried in the blankets. These were government property and she felt herself responsible for them. At the same time she directed the placing of the men, paying especial attention to the four serious cases, who withstood the excitement of the moving much better than she had thought they would.

At two o'clock the train was loaded, mattresses aboard, provisions stored and all government property, not destroyed in the wreck, accounted for. Grace breathed a sigh of relief when the task was finished, and, leaving Elfreda in charge, turned in for a short sleep. She got up at daylight, finding that they were still on the siding.

"Just as I expected," she declared laughingly. "Elfreda, you turn in. It is my turn to get the breakfast. You may have yours later. How did the men come through?"

"They all slept the night through. The trainmen have taken care of the two who passed out and will take them on to Paris."

Grace's face sobered, but she made no reply. Breakfast that morning was prepared on the station stove, and served, piping hot, by the orderly, which put the men in excellent shape for the journey. There would be no more hot meals, in all probability, until they reached Paris. Grace reported to Paris that their pa-

tients were on board, but no train stopped for them until after eleven o'clock that morning, when they were coupled to a westbound supply train which rumbled slowly away. They had a fairly uninterrupted run for an hour. That is, they had the right of way, but frequently were obliged to wait for other trains to take sidings to permit them to pass.

"It is a wonder the Americans haven't laid a second track on this important line," observed Elfreda.

"The Americans have been otherwise engaged of late," answered "Captain" Grace. "They are going to be still further engaged almost any day now. That is the reason I am eager to get back, for there is going to be the biggest and most important drive of the war, a drive that I believe is going to break the back of Heinie beyond all hope of repair. Happy day, eh, Elfreda?"

"Indeed it will be, then back to the law for J. Elfreda Briggs, never again to stray from the paths of peace. Once is enough to last me for a lifetime and on through any possible re-incarnations in the future ages. How is that, Loyalheart?"

"A wonderful flight. One could almost play that on a piano," laughed Grace.

The girls passed the rest of the day chatting

with the men. Grace had found some apples in a French village and gave the men a happy surprise when she passed them around late in the afternoon, and for those who could not use their hands, the girls scraped the apples and fed them to the patients on the point of a table knife, just the way many of them had been fed scraped apple when they were too young to eat them in the adult way.

It was midnight when the train finally pulled in at the Eastern Station in Paris, where ambulances were waiting to convey the men to the American Hospital at Neuilly. Elfreda rode in with the first lot, Grace remaining with the train until all of her charges had been placed in ambulances. "Captain" Grace then rode in with an ambulance driver, after having asked for and received a receipt for the government property which she had turned over at the station.

The two Overton girls were assigned to cots in the nurses' quarters for the night, and, with responsibility thrown off, they slept the night through without once turning on their pillows. The coming day was destined to offer a full measure of interest for both.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE HOUSE OF HAPPINESS

AS GRACE stepped out into the morning sunlight and drew in a long, delicious breath of freedom, a familiar figure limped across the lawn with the assistance of a cane and sat down on a bench on the hospital grounds.

"Tom!" murmured the Overton girl, her heart beating violently. "It surely is Tom."

She walked slowly toward him, mischief in her eyes, and stepping up behind, clasped both hands over the eyes of the wounded captain. Not a word was spoken by her, but the clasp of the hands set another heart beating faster than was its wont.

"I spy you, Grace Harlowe Gray," laughed the captain, grasping both her hands and pulling her around to the front of the bench.

"Oh, Tom, I am so glad to see you," she cried, leaning over and kissing him with more emotion than Grace ordinarily displayed. "How did you know who it was?"

"How could I help knowing? Do you believe

that you could get that close to me without my very soul responding? But let's get acquainted again before we grow sentimental. Grace, you are a fright—I mean your clothing is. Whatever have you been doing to yourself and what are you doing here?"

"Thank you for the compliment, Tom, dear. Aren't you glad to see me, just a little glad to have your soldier wife with you?"

"Glad? I am so happy that I hardly dare trust myself to look at you. You haven't told me about the clothes."

"I came through with two carloads of evacuated men whom I delivered to this hospital last night. Elfreda came with me. We were wrecked, and had a bad time of it. If you don't like the looks of my clothes you will have to blame the railroad—and Jerry who bombed us off the track. Tell me how you are—and Yvonne? When did you last see her?"

"Three days ago. I bribed a one-horse sea-going hack of the old Paris type to take me over to the school, and took Yvonne for a drive. Grace, she is the most wonderful child in the world."

"She is our daughter. Why shouldn't she seem wonderful to us?" answered Grace with shining eyes. "I can hardly wait until I dare go to see her. First I must make myself more

presentable, or Madame will be shocked. For the sake of Yvonne I must look my best when I go to the school. After breakfast I am going over to the Overton quarters for a change of clothing, then I will go to the school. Can you get away for the day without difficulty?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then, on my way back from the school with Yvonne, I will call for you. We can go to the Overton quarters and we three will have a happy day all to ourselves. Ask for leave until to-morrow and we will put up with the girls to-night."

"Will there be room?"

"There is always room for one more at the Overton unit. I must have you with me for the short time that I am here. A big drive is in prospect and I should be back at once, even though I have five days more of leave. How are you coming along, and when do the surgeons think you will be ready to return to the line?" she asked eagerly.

"In about two weeks."

"That will be fine. I fear, however, that you will be too late for the great drive through the Hindenburg Line."

Tom shook his head.

"They will go through, but at what a cost!" he muttered.

"I don't agree with you. The line is not nearly so formidable as the world has been led to believe. Of course there will be many casualties, but more in the German lines than in our own. However, the depleted ambulance section will be all too insignificant to take care of the work. I presume they will give us more assistance. Goodness knows we shall need it. Have you seen the girls?"

"Every week since I have been here. They come singly and in bunches," answered Tom smilingly. "They go to see Yvonne once every week laden with gifts. That Overton unit surely will turn the head of that happy little waif."

"Not a waif any longer, Tom, dear. Our daughter! I am glad I instructed Madame that she was to have no sweets except the limited quantity I named. Is she making progress with her studies?"

"Rapid! Madame is enthusiastic over her. Says she never had a pupil who learned so quickly or who was more studious, and that the child is the sunshine of the whole school. Just like her mother, eh?"

"But not a bit like her father," chided Grace teasingly. "I must run in to breakfast now. I think I can be back here say by eleven o'clock. See that you are ready. We can have our visit

out when we get home. Is there anything I may fetch you—anything you wish, Tom?”

“Yvonne and yourself,” he answered. “What more could any man ask?”

“You shall have one more kiss for that,” cried Grace, tilting up his chin, her own eyes shining down into those of her much-loved husband. She kissed him tenderly, patted his cheek and, blowing a kiss, turned and ran up to the hospital.

The Overton quarters were deserted when Grace got there, as she presumed they would be. She opened her trunk and hauled its contents out over the floor, selecting from her belongings a uniform that had never been worn. This she put on after dressing her hair, then putting everything in order went out in search of a cab. Half an hour later she was ushered into the reception room of the private school, where Madame welcomed her effusively.

“Yvonne? How is she?”

“Charming, like her charming mother,” answered the principal.

Grace said that the day being Friday, she wished to take the child with her, promising to return the little one on Monday, to which Madame readily agreed.

“Shall I send her to you as she is, or have her dress?”

“As she is. Then, if I may, I will go to her room and select such things as she will need while with me. Please do not tell her who is waiting for her.”

Madame said she understood, and left the room. Grace Harlowe realized that she had never experienced such a thrill as filled her whole being at that moment. “My daughter!” she murmured over and over again. “One day she too will be an Overton girl, the sweetest and most wonderful of them all, and we shall be so proud—and so happy.”

The rattle of curtain rings brought the Overton girl back to earth. Glancing up quickly she saw framed between the portieres a golden head from which two startled blue eyes were peering at her. Clad in the short little blue skirt that all the pupils of Madame’s school wore, crowned by a halo of golden hair, Yvonne presented a picture that Grace Harlowe Gray carried in memory for many days, and that was a solace and an inspiration to her in her work and her pleasures.

“*Ma mere!*”

“Yvonne! Oh, you darling!”

The little one was in her arms, hugging her and fairly smothering her face with kisses a few seconds later. Yvonne was crying a little, and Grace felt a hot tear drop on her own face.

Finally holding the child off she gazed earnestly into the face that she had learned to love so much.

"How are you, my darling, and how is kitty?"

"Kitty is watching for the mice. Wait, I will fetch her."

"No, no, not now, dearie. You are going with mother to see the girls of the Overton unit. Daddy will go with us, and we shall all be together until Monday, when Yvonne must return to school and mother must go back to the front to help the brave soldier boys. Shall you be happy to be with mother and daddy?"

"Yvonne is always happy, but she will be more so with 'Little Mother,'" replied the child with a depth of feeling that went straight to the heart of "Captain" Grace. "Will kitty go too?"

"If you really wish her to. Perhaps the Overton girls may have mice in their quarters, and if so they will be glad to have kitty catch them. I will ask Madame if we may take the cat with us. I suppose kitty will have to go across the sea with us to America when we all go back to our beautiful home there?"

"Yes, kitty will go. Kitty can swim. She swims every day when I give her a bath in the tub. Can you swim, *ma mere?*"

"Yes, dear."

"Can Daddy?"

"Yes, dear."

"Will Daddy teach Yvonne to swim?"

"Yes, every little girl should learn to swim, so that if she falls into the water she will be able to swim out and save herself."

Yvonne nodded thoughtfully.

"Take mother to your room now and we will get your clothes and start. Daddy is waiting for us at the hospital. We will stop there and take him with us."

Yvonne, her hand in that of her "Little Mother," danced all the way to the staircase, up which both ran like the two happy children they were, and to the little single room that Yvonne occupied. From the child's wardrobe Grace selected such things as she required, and packed them in the little one's suitcase, which they carried downstairs. Grace chatted briefly with Madame, after which mother and daughter went to the cab and drove to the hospital.

The child had learned a few English sentences, but Grace was not eager to have her learn to speak it fluently just yet, preferring to have Yvonne become well grounded in pure French first. English would come soon enough, and it was her intention that the child should never lose her own mother tongue.

Yvonne shed more tears when she found the strong arms of Tom Gray about her. She patted his head and his cheeks and sympathized with him over his wounds, until Tom himself reached a state of emotionalism almost equal to that in which Grace had been ever since she saw the child standing between the portieres at the school.

"Tom Gray, you and I are every bit as much children as this darling child is. We must wake up and come to a realization of our responsibilities or she will never grow up into a dignified woman," declared Grace.

"I hope she never does grow up. Let's keep her a child as long as we can—and ourselves too," he added in a lower tone.

They had the Overton quarters all to themselves, and the yellow cat got busy at once. At the end of the first thirty minutes in the quarters she had killed three mice, then all hands turned in to help the cat nose out some more, but their assistance only served to send the rest of the mice scampering to their holes, so the yellow cat was left to do her own stalking and to watch the holes, while Tom, Grace and Yvonne sat down for a happy afternoon.

Yvonne danced about at intervals, examining everything, and especially the wardrobes of the Overton girls. Later in the afternoon Grace

and Yvonne went out to do some marketing. Upon their return they found Anne Pierson there, and with her was her husband, Lieutenant David Nesbit, U. S. A., on leave to visit his wife, the first time he had seen her since he went away to war.

Grace introduced Yvonne as "my daughter."

"Hm-m-m," reflected the lieutenant. "If I may venture to pass an opinion, war is not wholly without its compensations. Grace, you have drawn a prize package. You always did draw first prizes except when you drew Tom Gray. How's irrepressible Hippy Wingate?"

"Making a record for himself that will live in history long after you and I have passed on, David."

"I never could, by any stretch of the imagination, see Hippy in the role of a bird," interjected Tom.

"You would were you to see him fly," replied Grace. "He is wonderful, as much at home on a cloud as he is with his feet on the ground, and a great deal more graceful. You people sit still and visit. Yvonne and I will cook supper for the outfit, and at the same time Yvonne will have her first lesson in cooking."

Yvonne was full of eagerness for the lesson, and the two chattered incessantly, the child observing and asking questions in a manner that

told Grace the little one's mentality was something to be proud of.

Yvonne set the table under the critical eyes of *ma mere*, and was instructed in properly placing the table settings as well as to how the food should be served. Anne came in and offered to assist, but Grace said she needed no assistance outside of what Yvonne was giving her.

"Sit down and talk to us while we are getting the dinner. Tell me all about yourself. I suppose Elfreda wrote to you about our escape from the Boches. I wish you might have seen her during the journey here with the wounded soldiers. She was splendid. Elfreda Briggs is a wonderful woman, Anne."

"I know that, but if she follows you she will come to a violent end. I learned my lesson a long time ago, early in the war, in fact. You perhaps have observed that I exhibit no eagerness to go outside of the hospital grounds with you. Elfreda will learn her lesson too."

"She has learned it. It is time she were here. J. Elfreda went out shopping. She must be buying out the stores, for she has been out ever since breakfast this morning. There comes some one now."

It was Elfreda Briggs, flushed and happy. Her bundles clattered to the floor when she saw

Yvonne, and her arms, flung wide, received the little golden-haired girl in a bear-like hug.

That was the beginning. It did not end until late that night. Soon after Elfreda's arrival the girls of the unit came straggling in, uttering little cries of delight, each one running to Yvonne and hugging her delightedly before greeting the others of their guests.

"I fear the child will be utterly spoiled before Monday morning," declared Grace Harlowe disapprovingly.

"Don't be a grouch," begged Elfreda. "This is to be a house of happiness to-night. It may be a long time before we all shall see another like it, perhaps never."

CHAPTER X

WHERE THE BIG GUNS BOOMED

IT was a happy party that sat down to dinner at the Overton quarters that evening, and it was a most excellent dinner that Grace and little Yvonne had prepared for them. Besides Grace, Elfreda and Anne, there were Mabel Ashe, Arline Thayer, Ruth Denton and Emma Dean, all trying to talk at once and most of them succeeding.

Elfreda related the thrilling story of her escape from the German patrol and the wreck of the hospital train. She told them how Grace had cooked a meal in the firebox of a locomotive, chopped down part of the French railroad station for fuel, and gave orders to the commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces.

“I did not,” objected Grace. “I hope you all know I am too good a soldier to attempt to do such a foolish thing. I simply wired him what the conditions were, which it was my duty to do. By the way, Emma, how is Lieutenant William?”

"Fighting. If he is smacked again I know I shall die. This suspense is awful," wailed Emma Dean.

"Of course you correspond with him?"

"What's the good of correspondence? I ask you, Grace Harlowe, as a woman of experience in such matters, how can two loving hearts put down their tender thoughts on paper when they know that the cold eyes of a Second Loot are going to scan them and grin over the outpourings of one's heart? Why, a couple might as well correspond through the personal columns of a daily newspaper."

"Having had no experience in writing love letters for the edification of a company censor, Emma Dean to the contrary, I fear that my evidence will be of little value," answered Grace laughingly.

"Do you mean to tell me that you and Tom never write love letters to each other?"

"Of course not. We do not have to."

"If that's the way married people act, I think I can have more fun in remaining single," declared Emma heatedly. "The very idea! I don't see why people get married if it isn't for the sake of being able to make love to each other all the time, instead of only on Sundays and holidays. What I shall expect of my husband is a continuous performance, a reel of happiness

that will entertain the audience for ever and ever."

Emma's further remarks on the subject were lost in the shouts of laughter of everyone present.

"Alas, poor William," groaned David.

Anne Pierson said her experience had been that men and women in the war zone lost much of the tender feelings that they possessed in peace time.

Grace declared that this attitude was on the surface, that the hearts of those who were devoted to each other did not change in war or peace, and she appealed, mischievously, to J. Elfreda to tell them what her attitude would be in such circumstances as Emma had described.

"I—I believe I should feel happy if the Boches were to shoot the censor," declared Elfreda blushing.

"Elfreda herself is beginning to have heart-twinges," spoke up Grace. "As yet she isn't very responsive to those feelings, but when the right man comes along we'll all receive invitations by the next mail."

"I object to the witness's testimony," retorted Elfreda. "If the court please, let the witness confine herself to facts."

"That's what I say," agreed Captain Tom Gray. "I propose that we change the subject."

The Overton girls and their guests soon turned to the serious topics connected with the war, and that lay close to the hearts of all of them. It was late when the party broke up, David to go to the officers' club for the night, the others to pack themselves in as best they might in the rooms of the unit. Three army cots were set up in the front room for the Gray family, the rest of the party making up their own cots in the dining room.

Monday morning came all too soon, and with it the return of Yvonne to her school. The little yellow-haired girl laughed through her tears as Grace bade her adieu, and as she turned to wave a final good-bye the picture she saw was Yvonne hugging the yellow cat and throwing kisses first from her own lips, then from the lips of the cat.

Grace, for the moment, forgot her own sorrow in her enjoyment of that scene.

"Was there ever such a child?" she cried.

There was a luncheon engagement with Tom and Elfreda that day, and after this they went to Grace's headquarters, where she found an imperative order to return to the front at once.

"I expected it," she said simply, handing the order to her husband. "You aren't included in it, Elfreda."

"It doesn't matter, I shall go when you do, but I hope and pray it may not take us five days

to make the journey. Once back at the front I shall never leave it again until either I am carried out or the war ends."

The two girls boarded a train late that night and started for the front, where they arrived late on the following day.

They were needed. The drive for the line was on, small advance actions already were being fought, and the heavy artillery was booming back of both armies. It really was a relief to "Captain" Grace to be within sound of the guns again, and it was a pleasure to have every one out there so glad to see her.

Major Price offered his apologies for having recalled her, and at the same time congratulated both young women on their splendid work with the hospital train.

"Your car is ready whenever you are, Mrs. Gray. The chief of your section is fuming because you did not get in early this morning. He hasn't traveled on French railroads as much as we have, eh?"

"I hope not in the way we traveled on this journey."

The car that was assigned to Grace was not a vehicle to be proud of. Its top showed the marks of bullets and shell splinters, the radiator was leaky, the commutator dirty and two spark plugs were missing. She did the best she

could to put the car in good working order, but hers was not a wholly successful job. She found that the car would run, but the noise it made threatened its early dissolution.

Her first assignment was to take a load of wounded men to the evacuation hospital, after which she was sent to a dressing station a mile back of the American lines. From that time on "Captain" Grace got no rest in many hours. Nor did she find time to get a single mouthful of food until midnight, when, leaving her car in front of the chief's office, she ran in to share the nurses' midnight luncheon with them.

Elfreda was there, telling an appreciative audience of the experiences of herself and Grace on their journey to Paris.

"Don't ask me any questions, young women. I am in a frightful hurry," begged Grace. "Miss Briggs is the eye-witness observer. Things are beginning to get brisk out on the line, and we shall have some lively work here about to-morrow."

"Lively work appears to be your life occupation, Mrs. Gray," observed a supervising nurse. "I do not believe I could stand it to go through what you have experienced. Trouble seems to follow you like an—"

A tremendous explosion somewhere out front cut short the nurse's words.

"Jerry has arrived!" cried a voice.

"That was a hit," observed Elfreda shrilly.

"I wonder what it struck?"

"Probably my ambulance," interjected

"Captain" Grace. "However, it can't be much worse looking than it was when I left it. I—"

"Mrs. Gray! Mrs. Gray!" called an excited female voice at the door. "Your ambulance has just been blown up!"

"Thank you. I'll be out and put it together again in a few minutes," answered the Overton girl, proceeding with her luncheon.

CHAPTER XI

THE HEART OF A DOUGHBOY

THE ambulance was not "put together" by any one. It had been blown to bits, its pieces hurled in all directions, some of them going through hospital tents. Grace found a front wheel in her own tent.

"Where is Jerry?" she demanded after a brief glance at the wreck.

"We haven't seen anything of him," answered Ferrot, the Belgian attendant.

"No airplanes have been heard here to-

night," added a fellow driver. "Must have been flying mighty high."

Major Price and the chief of the ambulance section were investigating. They could not understand it. No shells were falling and, so far as any one had heard, not an enemy plane had been over that region during the evening.

"Have you any theory as to how this occurred?" demanded the major, turning to "Captain" Grace.

"Yes, sir, of course. No shells, no airplanes. The car was blown up by a bomb that was placed in it. The wreckage indicates that. Look at this piece of the top. Can you not see that the explosion was from within?"

Major Price was filled with rage.

"That means we have a traitor here!" he breathed. "I have suspected it; now I know. We have nothing to take its place, but I'll telephone up to the evacuation hospital and ask them to send us a car immediately. Our end of the work must have first call just now."

"Thank you. Do you think we can get it here to-night?"

"If there is a car not in urgent use, I'll get it," promised the major.

"If there is anything I can do for you, Mrs. Gray, it will give me pleasure to serve you," offered the Belgian, sidling up to her.

"Thank you. There is nothing," she replied, giving him a quick, searching look. "That is, unless you can furnish another car."

He shrugged his shoulders and smirked.

"Sorry," he said.

"Captain" Grace turned away and walked up and down by herself. She wished to think, and she did think, weighing every little detail of the last few weeks that might possibly have a bearing on the disaster. Not that it was material, for the car was old and about ready to be scrapped, but that there was another side to the affair. As the major had said, there must be a traitor among them.

It was a disturbing thought, especially so when Grace considered that this traitor had been there for a long time, if what she had surmised were true. Many little things had occurred to lead her to believe that the field hospital included an enemy among its workers.

The Overton girl suddenly became conscious that she was being followed. This did not disturb her, rather did it make her curious. She halted and so unexpectedly had she turned that the person behind bumped fairly into her. He was a soldier, and apologized profusely.

"What is it, Buddy? You were following me?" she demanded.

"Yes, I wanted to speak to you."

"Why didn't you?" Her tone was encouraging.

"I guess I kind of lost my nerve. You see you don't know me."

"No, I do not believe I do. Have you the advantage of me there?"

"Yes; you are 'Captain' Grace. You brought me in in your ambulance one night several weeks ago. I thought maybe you would take a walk with me."

"Captain" Grace knew soldiers, knew them almost better than they knew themselves, and she knew that here was one who had something on his mind that he wished to confide in some one.

"Of course I will walk with you, if you wish, Buddy. Where do you wish to go?"

"Anywhere so no one will overhear."

Grace said she could not go far, that she was on duty and likely to be called any moment—the instant a car was found for her, so they strolled back and forth in the darkness, speaking of the war, he avoiding the subject that he so much wished to speak of.

"Now, Buddy, what is it? You're homesick, aren't you?"

"Everybody is homesick over here. No, that isn't all that is the matter with me, it is something else. Will you do something for me?"

She assured him that she would, and urged the young soldier to confide in her fully.

"My big boy is a soldier man too—my husband. He was taken prisoner, wounded, and was missing for many weeks. I know what it is to worry, so you are talking to a real comrade when you tell me your troubles. Out with it, Buddy."

It was a simple tale that he told to "Captain" Grace, to the effect that before sailing from Newport News he was secretly wedded to a girl that his parents had objected to his marrying.

"Is she a nice girl, Buddy?"

"One of the best in the world, but she is not of the same religion as my people and that's where the trouble is."

"If she is a good girl and will make you a good wife, why worry? Why get so blue?"

"'Captain,' I am going up to the line some-time to-morrow. This time I shall not come back in your ambulance. You have lived up here where things are smashing around promiscuously, and you know by this time that when a soldier gets a hunch that he is going to get his, he sure is out o' luck. I'm going West this time."

She fully understood. It was uncanny the way soldiers were able to foretell their fate a few days or hours before they were taken off.

Grace had known of innumerable cases of that sort, and her interest in the young soldier at her side quickened.

“I hope yours isn’t a good hunch, Buddy, but tell me what you wish and it shall be done if in my power.”

“Write to the folks and tell them, tell them that I went to it like a man, and that I never whimpered. Ask them for the sake of the boy who died for his love of country—I’m a volunteer, you know—to be good to the girl. She’ll get my insurance and my Liberty Bond. I have written an order on the government to give the bond to her. I have also written the story, part of it, to my people. It is all here. What I wish you to do is to take these papers, and when I get mine send them to my mother, all but the order for the bond. That please send to her. I would do it myself, but you see I probably shan’t be doing much of anything but fooling round on the field out there and waiting for something, I don’t know what, when this big push is ended.” He handed the package to her, and she asked:

“Are the addresses here?”

“Yes. This letter is for the girl, the wife. The larger package and letter with it are for mother. I’m sending her a boudoir cap that I got up in Doullons. Mother will like that. You

can enclose your letter to her with mine, and tell her how it all happened."

"Buddy, if the necessity arises I will do all and more than you have asked."

"I know it—that's why I made bold to speak to you. Everybody around here knows that 'Captain' Grace is the soldier's friend, that she is one of their own kind. Thank you. I'll ask the Loot (lieutenant) to let you know when I get it. Good-bye."

Grace shook hands with him, then, coming to attention, brought her hand to her helmet in salute, which the doughboy gravely returned and strode away into the darkness.

"'A soldier of the Legion lay dying at Algiers,' " quoted Grace and burst into tears.

Half an hour later she walked into the office of the commanding officer, her eyes a little red, her face pale and set, for this interview out there in the darkness had affected her deeply, touched her heart to the core.

"May I ask, sir, what are the prospects for a car?" she questioned.

"One is on the way now. By the way, I missed you."

The ambulance driver gave her superior a quick, appraising glance.

"I was walking with a doughboy who wished me to do something for him in case he fell, sir."

Grace had all she could do to keep back the tears at the recollection of that interview.

"It is unnecessary for you to explain, Mrs. Gray, though it does explain a message that I found on my desk when I came in just now. Here it is. Do not misunderstand me when I ask you to read it. Neither explanation nor apology is necessary from you; I am offering it to you hoping that you may be able to identify the writing. I should like to get hold of the cur who wrote it, that's all."

The message, scrawled on a piece of wrapping paper, read: "If you wish to know where the driver of the ambulance who blew up a car because she didn't like it, is, look for her down the road quizzing a soldier."

The muscles of "Captain" Grace's face tightened. She laid the paper on the desk and directed a level gaze at Major Price.

"What do you think of it, Mrs. Gray?" he questioned.

"I think, sir, that when we find the author of that anonymous communication we shall be hot on the trail of the man who blew up the ambulance this evening," she answered evenly.

"I agree with you. Keep your eyes open. A hound who will write a letter like this will not stop at murder. I hope I get my hands on him."

"Thank you, sir," replied Grace. "I will get my orders now, if I may. The car probably will be here by the time I am ready." The Overton girl saluted and left the office of the commanding officer of the hospital.

"I think I should like to find that man myself," she muttered. Grace first went to her tent, where she turned the soldier's package over to Elfreda for safe keeping, telling Miss Briggs the story and asking her, in the event of anything happening both to the doughboy and to Grace, to forward the letters and the packages and to write to the mother and the young wife.

"Are you looking to get smacked, too?" demanded Elfreda.

"No, but my promise to that boy must be kept. I might be captured or I might lose the papers. There's rough work ahead. Good night, I'm off."

Twenty minutes later Grace was in an ambulance, driving with all speed toward the front lines, the earth rocking under her as the big guns of both sides opened up. The battle was on. The great drive that was to end in the rout of the German army was opening with a great duel of big guns.

CHAPTER XII

FRITZIES FIND A FRIEND

THERE was need for ambulances that night, but getting near the advanced dressing stations was a perilous undertaking. The Huns were shelling every spot where they had reason to believe an American was stationed. It mattered not whether such Americans were combatants or not. More steel was falling than Grace had ever seen before. It was a deluge on her side of the line, and she wondered what it must be on the other side where the Americans were laying down two shells to the enemy's one.

Grace drove the rest of the night through, and she drove fast, for the road was good, though fearfully congested and under fire almost every foot of the way. Many trucks were hit, ammunition dumps here and there were blown up, and great flashes, accompanied a few seconds later by distant *booms*, told her that enemy ammunition dumps had shared a similar fate. These flashes on the enemy side were more frequent than those on her own side.

Surgeons and stretcher-bearers were working out at the front at top speed. No one had the time to talk, except to give necessary orders, and these were delivered tersely, vocal explosions every one of them. Grace barely left her car during the night. By the time she had backed it up to a dressing station the doors were thrown open and stretcher men were thrusting moaning soldiers in. Ordinarily a man not seriously wounded rode on the front seat with the driver, but there was little conversation, the patient not feeling like talking and the driver being too busy watching the road to indulge in lengthy conversation.

Shortly after daylight Grace was on her way back with five wounded men, none of them serious cases, from a very advanced station on ground that the enemy had held the day before, but that now was in American hands, when she saw three heads appear out of a hole in the ground on one side of the road, and duck back again. She drew off to the right to see what it meant, thinking that perhaps there might be wounded men in a shell hole.

Getting near the place she discovered that it was a dugout, and inferred that doughboys were in there.

"I'll give them a scare," she confided to the man sitting by her. "The Buddies won't mind,

I guess. Come out, you Fritzies!" she shouted in German. "Come out unless you want me to bomb you out!"

She had sprung out of the car to get a better view of the place, probably guided in her action by an intuitiveness which was characteristic of Grace Harlowe, when to her amazement men, in single file, began emerging from the dugout, their hands in the air, their faces wearing an expression of relief.

"Fritzies!" exclaimed the doughboy on the driver's seat. "Well, I'll be blest!"

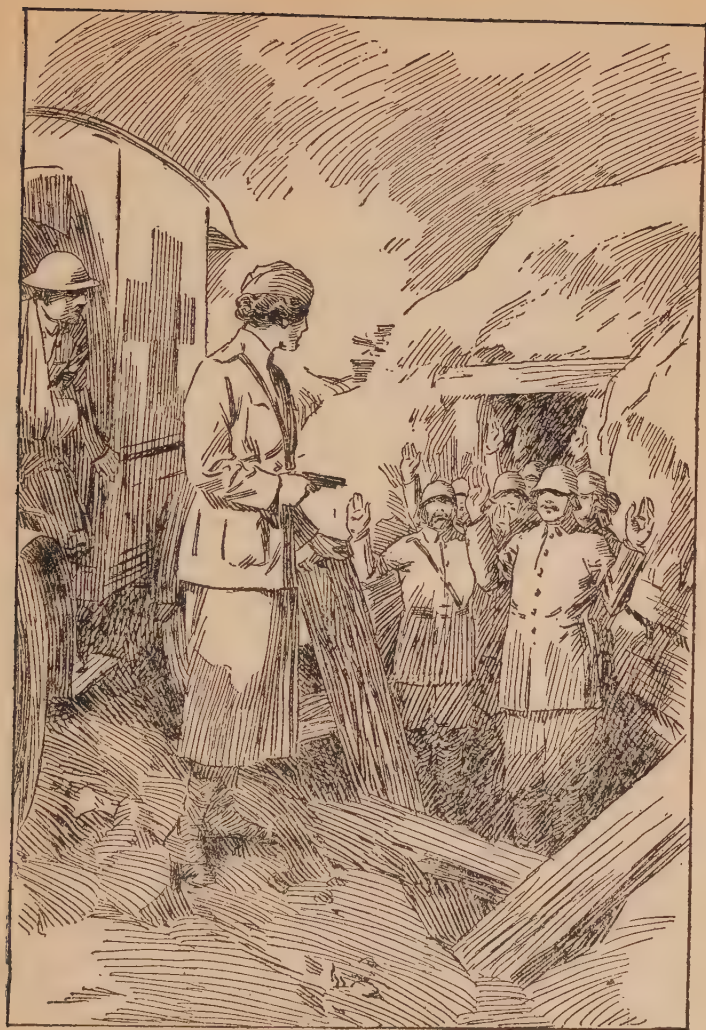
"What? Germans?" gasped "Captain" Grace. "Who are you?"

"From the 232nd Bavarian Regiment," one of the Germans said. "Don't shoot, we go."

"How many of you? Come out every one of you!" she commanded sternly. "I have soldiers with me." She did not say that her soldiers were not even able to help themselves, and perhaps it would have made no difference to the Huns, for, to her, they seemed unduly eager to be taken in.

"Twelve," answered the spokesman.

"Line up! Keep your hands up," she commanded, reaching for the Luger pistol that a wounded Buddy had given to her to take care of for him, knowing that if it went to the hospital with him he never would see it again.



“Come Out!”

“Say, girlie, you’re all right,” approved the doughboy on the front seat. “If you’ll keep ’em covered I think I can pick up a few souvenirs from them before the fellows further along get a chance at them.”

“No souvenirs will be taken from these prisoners so long as they are in my charge,” answered “Captain” Grace. “You men march straight ahead. So long as you behave yourselves you will be all right, but don’t change your minds and try to run away. Forward!”

The strange outfit was greeted by howls and yells from soldiers on trucks and afoot. One group resting by the roadside made a rush for the prisoners to “fritz” them—relieve them of their belongings.

“Keep out of this, fellows. These are my prisoners.”

“But they’ve got things on them,” protested a soldier.

“So have you. You see I promised to bring home some Huns with me to exhibit at a charity bazaar, but this is the first likely bunch I have met up with and I wish to preserve them intact,” added the Overton girl laughingly.

The soldiers howled.

“Go on! You win,” shouted one, and the procession moved. The wounded man on the front seat acquainted his fellows back in the

ambulance with what was going on, and some of them, despite their wounds, began to sing.

"Take it easy back there, Buddies," warned Grace. "Remember I am responsible for you. Sorry I have to go so slowly, but I couldn't leave these poor Fritzies back there in the dug-out when they were so eager to get into a Yankee prison pen."

"Take your time. It's worth it," they called to her.

Several times on the way back Grace was obliged to be severe with souvenir-mad Yankee doughboys who insisted on removing the emblems from the caps of the prisoners and searching them for souvenirs. Grace succeeded in protecting her charges, however, and not a souvenir did a doughboy get from that outfit during the entire journey.

"When I turn them over our fellows may help themselves, as they probably will, but I don't care for that sort of thing. It is too much like stealing to suit me."

"Aw say, girlie, they're only Boches," protested her companion.

"But we are Americans and shouldn't forget that," she responded. "To whom do I turn these men over, Buddy? Now that I have them I don't know what to do with them."

"Any officer can take them off your hands.

Better take them on to the field hospital and turn them in there. They will make a hit."

"I think they will," agreed Grace.

The grounds about the hospital were filled with convalescent patients, who gazed in wonder at seeing an ambulance with wounded driving ahead of it a dozen German soldiers. A yell went up when the full import of the scene was realized by them.

"Is Ferrot about?" called Grace as she drove in.

"Over there," answered a stretcher-bearer, pointing to a tent.

"Prisoners halt! Call Ferrot, somebody."

The Belgian came out, Grace watching him narrowly as he took in the scene. The expression on his face interested her greatly.

"My compliments to Major Price, Ferrot, and say to him that I have twelve German prisoners here and wish to know what to do with them."

"The froggie doesn't seem to be pleased," growled the soldier by her side, glowering at the Belgian.

"It is constitutional with him," answered Grace. "A perpetual grouch such as many persons acquire in wartime, especially Fritzies. There comes the major. Better get down, Buddy."

Major Price and an aide were seen striding toward them. He halted upon observing the prisoners, looked them over curiously, then walked over to the ambulance.

"Where did you get these men?"

"From a dugout on our side of the line. Our fellows failed to mop them up, sir."

"This is rather serious, Mrs. Gray."

"I am aware of that, sir, but I could not let an opportunity such as this pass. There was no one to take them in, and perhaps after night-fall they might have managed to get back to their own lines."

"No apologies necessary. You have done well and should be commended for it. I will turn them over to the first officer I see going to the rear. Thank you."

"The men have not been searched, sir. Would it not be a good plan to have some one do that for possible papers, orders and the like?"

"Excellent idea. I'll have my aide attend to that."

The prisoners were marched to a tent and a guard put over them, after which they were searched and then marched to the rear.

"You have done it this time, Grace Harlowe," rebuked Elfreda Briggs shaking a warning finger at "Captain" Grace, when they met a few minutes later.

Grace admitted that perhaps she had.

“If the enemy, having heard of this, should get hold of you I fear it would go hard with you.”

“No doubt, but I don’t propose that they shall get me, J. Elfreda. I fully expect to be too busy to permit of my being captured. After that the war will be over; then nothing much will matter, and we shall be on our way to America. Won’t that be a grand and glorious feeling, dear?”

“The most glorious thing in the world from the present point of view,” agreed Elfreda, “but I don’t see us experiencing it just yet awhile.”

“We shall see,” replied Grace.

It proved to be a busy day for Grace Harlowe in her work of mercy. Just before dark she halted at the field hospital only long enough to sit down and eat a hurried supper, after which she took to the road again and drove with all the speed she dared put on.

Darkness having fallen, Grace drove to the immediate rear of the line on which the Twenty-Seventh and Thirtieth Divisions were operating, with the Third British Corps on their left, the Australians and the Tenth French Army to the right, forming a formidable front. Opposed to them were the flower of the German

army, making a desperate fight to hold their enemy back, but already showing signs of a weakening morale.

Everything that the enemy had to send over was breaking about the Overton girl. The explosions were deafening. The air was full of dust, suffocating fumes, flying pieces of steel and ricochetting bullets of small calibre that sped past with a familiarly weird *zing!* Stretcher-bearers plodded stolidly through the storm, bringing in gravely wounded men on their litters; men with bandaged heads staggered or crawled in unaided, others with superficial wounds hurried in to have those wounds dressed, after which they surreptitiously slipped away again, instead of going to the rear as ordered, to once more plunge into the maelstrom of battle from which many of them did not again return. It was a scene that lived for years in the memory of Grace Harlowe, and in the memories of all who participated in that night of turmoil and terror.

It was on one of these journeys to the front that the Overton driver, finding no stretcher-men at hand to load up for her, went into the dressing station to inform the officer in charge that she was waiting. She was told that there was not a stretcher-bearer left at the station, and that the bearers out on the field had, in

many instances, fallen with their stretcher loads.

“Some one give a hand and I will help load,” she offered.

An assistant surgeon offered his services and together they began lifting men into the ambulance.

They had placed four seriously wounded cases into the ambulance, and were in the dug-out dressing station placing another on their stretcher when there occurred an explosion that hurled every person in the underground room violently to the floor, stunning all and rendering some unconscious.

Grace got up dazedly.

“That one evidently was marked for us,” she stammered, her face pale and drawn, for the shock had been almost too much for her nerves to stand. It had deafened most of them too, and they had to shout to make themselves heard. The assistant who was aiding her got up and looked himself over inquiringly.

“I surely thought I had been hit,” he said, grinning through the smoke that hung in a haze under the swaying lamp over the operating table.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE

“SOMETHING was hit,” averred “Captain” Grace. “It was rather close, wasn’t it?”

“Yes. Come, let’s get these men into the ambulance so you may get out of this. It is no place for a woman.”

“There may be no ambulance left to put them in, Lieutenant,” she replied. “Before we move this case let’s have a look.”

They stepped outside and gazed about them, flashes from exploding shells lighting up the scene intermittently. Where the ambulance had stood there was a hole in the ground, and about it lay scattered fragments of the car, but that was all that was left of the mercy-wagon to show that it had ever existed.

“Poor fellows,” muttered the Overton driver, referring to the men they had so recently placed in the ambulance.

“They never knew what hit them,” replied the lieutenant. “It is a merciful way to go, but it’s tough luck. What now?”

"I will help out here until I find an opportunity to get back to my station. They will not be at all surprised to hear that the ambulance is lost. Losing ambulances has become a habit with me. This is the second one in two days. How many crews with stretchers have you?"

"I can't say. We had a number of them earlier in the night, but it's different now. There comes one man of a pair of them."

Grace observed that the bearer wore a first aid bandage over his head.

"It's purgatory out there!" he shouted. "Got another man for me?"

The lieutenant shook his head.

"Can't give you even a part of one. All of our own men at the station are casualties."

"How far out are you operating?" questioned Grace.

"A few hundred yards. The enemy lines are right in front of us here. Our people are putting down a barrage, and that is all that is holding the Huns back. When the barrage rises the tanks will go over and the reserves will be poured in. I understand the Australians are to go over our men at a certain point in the battle, and take the lead. What am I going to do, Lieutenant?"

"Lead in the walking cases, that's all you can do."

"Get a stretcher. I'll go out with you," offered Grace.

"Can't do it, Miss," answered the stretcher-bearer.

"I will go alone, then," was her firm rejoinder. "I am not the kind of a woman that folds her hands and sits down in the face of an emergency, Buddy. Come, let's go," she urged with lips close to his ear that the officer might not hear. "It won't be my first time on the line. I am not a weakling."

"If you were you wouldn't be out here. I can't help it if you go out, but I tell you I'll not approve of it."

"Get your stretcher," directed "Captain" Grace sharply. "We are wasting time in talk."

While he was getting a stretcher, Grace slipped away from the station and waited for him just beyond it. After a few moments of waiting she saw the man coming and crept aside until he had passed, after which she followed on close behind him.

"Seven cases in a shell-hole five hundred yards straight ahead," shouted a stretcher-bearer on his way in, bearing one end of a litter. "Got them in but that was all we could do for them except to give first aid. Better take them out. Where's the other man?"

"Gone West."

The man she was following forged on, not once looking behind him. She wondered if he were wondering what had become of her, but as a matter of fact he had forgotten all about her. Grace saw him searching for the shell-hole, saw him peer down into one, then crawl down into it.

A moment later the Overton girl was at the edge of the crater, into which she slid without regard to the way she did it.

"I'm here, Buddy," she called cheerfully. "Dusty out on the river this evening, isn't it?"

"What, you?" demanded the litter-bearer.

"Yes, let's get out the worst case first. I expect there will be a barrage along here almost any time now."

"I suppose you'll stay out here if I don't let you go back with me," growled the soldier.

"You have guessed it, Buddy. Better lift him to the top. There isn't room down here to open up the litter." Without waiting for his approval, Grace threw the stretcher out and, following it, opened it up. She then slid back into the shell-crater. "All ready, Buddy. Have you the case?"

"Yes. Get up top and I'll lift him. Too bad, but it can't be helped."

The head and shoulders of the wounded man appeared about the time Grace reached the top. She grasped the patient under the arms and

gently dragged him onto the litter without assistance from her companion.

"I guess this isn't the first time you've handled cases," he growled.

"I am an ambulance driver. Let's go."

Stumbling over the shell-torn field with the battle raging about them, "Captain" Grace and her companion made all speed possible back to the dressing station with their burden.

Grace and the litter-bearer hurried out.

"You're not going back?" he questioned.

"I am. I lost my car, and this is my work for the present. When you find some one to handle an end of the litter I'll try to get back to my station and get another car." She had no hope that one would be available for her that night, and therefore made up her mind to spend the night on the field or near it.

The litter-bearer grumbled, but offered no further objections, evidently concluding that it was useless to argue with a woman. Seven trips were made to the shell-crater and seven live but seriously wounded men were brought in, men who would have died had they not received early attention. She had seen men fall about her that night, she had witnessed such sights as would have unnerved her had she not been so keyed to the needs of the hour, for the Overton girl had put a firm grip on her emotions when

she decided to go out into that field of suffering. She was leg-weary and arm-weary, but her pluck enabled her to keep on and on. Their work carried them further and further toward the enemy lines, where patrols were fighting, where they were but a short distance behind the American barrage, where the barbed wire entanglements before the Hindenburg Line covered acres and acres of No Man's Land. Grace was still there when the first streaks of the early dawn of that memorable September morning grayed the mists that hung over the landscape. She was hollow-eyed, and staggered as she bore her end of the litter.

At 5.30 that morning two regiments of infantry went over the top and thirty huge tanks lumbered out from their resting place, all far behind where Grace Harlowe and her associate were working close up to the wire of the enemy.

About this time a rifle bullet laid low her litter-bearer. When Grace knelt down beside him she saw that first aid was not needed, that she was alone so far as assistance was concerned. There were men about her, many of them, but each was too fully occupied with his own immediate affairs to give her a thought.

The fire grew hotter, and Grace crawled into a shell-crater for a few moments' relief from the storm and to rest her weary body. The wire

before her, as she well knew, was the outer edge of the formidable defenses of the Hindenburg Line. Beyond those acres of wire were "The Knoll," "Guillemont Farm" and "Quennemont Farm." Picked German troops held these positions, the entire outer defense system bristling with light and heavy machine guns, minenwerfers, anti-tank guns and concealed field pieces, while at Guillemont Farm were powerful flame-throwers.

On rising ground at the rear of this formidable series of outworks was the main Hindenburg system, based on the underground tunnel that carried the St. Quentin Canal. Great numbers of German troops, held in reserve, lived in canal boats in the tunnel under the hills, while underground passages, saps and valleys led from the tunnels to trenches through which to rush reserves to any point of the line.

Grace Harlowe knew in a general way of all these things, for she had been the recipient of many confidences since she had been in such close touch with the lines covering a period of many months. Knowing what she did, she was able to formulate a plan of campaign that she was certain the American forces would attempt to carry out. They were carrying out this plan at that very moment, men to the rear of her already were falling, tanks were bearing down on

the field of wire, and out in the wire men who had been cutting its strands lay suffering without a helping hand.

A cry for help reached her as she crouched in the shell-crater. Grace sprang up to listen. The cry was repeated.

“Some one is out there!” she cried. “There is an opening just above here. I hope I can get through and find him.”

Without considering consequences Grace ran, bending low, found the opening and crept in. A channel had been cut into the wire by the wire-clippers, leading straight in, and through this she made her way, tearing her uniform on the projecting barbs and clipped ends.

The cries had seemed to come from the direction in which she was proceeding. She paused to listen, when the cry was repeated, now sounding much nearer.

“Who calls? Where?” she called.

“Here!”

The voice sounded to the right of her, amid what seemed to her to be a tangled mass of wire. She picked her way through it, between two rows, and stumbled over a man. He was an officer, a second lieutenant who had been wounded while leading a patrol.

He gazed up in amazement to see a woman bending over him in that storm-swept space.

"Where are you hit?" she demanded in a business-like tone.

"All over except in the head. The wound in my stomach is serious. Get help."

"The best I can do, sir, is to drag you out of the wire and get you in a shell-hole where the litter-bearers will find you. I can give you first aid there. Can you stand it to be dragged?"

"Yes. I can—" His voice trailed away into a murmur. He had fainted, as she discovered after a hurried examination. This simplified her work very much. Grabbing him under the arms the Overton girl backed out of the maze with the lieutenant until she reached the channel made by the wire-cutters, whereupon she turned her back to him, placed his back against her own and staggered out with him.

Several times on that journey she was forced to put her burden down and stand gasping for breath. At last she succeeded in reaching the shell-crater, where she revived the man, gave him water from his own canteen and, placing a cigarette between his lips, lighted it for him, his eyes so full of pain, gazing up wonderingly into the face of "Captain" Grace.

"Are there any other men out there, Lieutenant?" she questioned.

"Yes."

"Where?"

“A dozen yards or so from where you found me—I mean a dozen yards nearer the enemy lines. Who are you?”

“Grace Gray, ambulance driver. I lost my car and I’m working with the litter-men, or was. I guess there aren’t many of them left. I’m going back to see what I can do. Is there anything more that I may do for you first?”

The officer shook his head.

“Has the attack started?”

Grace said she did not know.

“It was to start at 5.30, zero. The tanks ought to be here soon. I’m afraid you’ll be killed if you go out again.”

“I never have been,” answered Grace brightly. “I’ll be back soon, if I am in luck. Have you rations?”

He nodded, following her with those eyes of pain as the girl climbed out of the shell-hole. She waved and smiled to him and disappeared from his range of vision.

Again Grace was successful, this time bringing in a corporal, after she had given him first aid out there in the wire. He was wounded in both legs and had sustained a severe scalp wound, and she found handling him more difficult than had been the case with the officer. It hurt him to be dragged and it hurt him to be laid on the ground.

"You will have to stand it, I am afraid, Buddy," she declared finally. "Buck up now, and be good. I must get you in and then come back to look for the others."

"Carry on. I'll not make another groan," he promised. He kept his promise, though she knew full well that he was suffering great pain. Grace got him in and treated him to water and a cigarette, as she had done a few moments before for the lieutenant.

"Wait! I'll put out a signal," she said. Outside she searched for and found a rifle which she stuck into the ground by its bayonet, hanging the corporal's helmet on the butt of the gun, knowing that this unusual signal would attract the attention of any searching litter-bearer. The signal bore fruit, for when Grace next returned with a private who was unconscious, she found that two stretcher-bearers had been there and taken the officer back to a dressing post, promising to return for the corporal as soon as possible.

Once more "Captain" Grace went back into the field of wire, where she searched for more wounded, all the time keeping her bearings as best she could, for once lost it were next to impossible to find one's way out. Despite her caution, however, she lost her way, and the more she tried to locate her position the more

hopelessly did she become entangled in the maze of wire.

“Captain” Grace sat down heavily, worn out, her nerves at the breaking point. She failed at first to hear in the tremendous uproar the wail of a shell until it was close at hand, but when she did hear it, instead of flattening herself on the ground the Overton girl forgot her prudence and leaped to her feet. The shell exploded within fifty yards of her and “Captain” Grace was hurled violently into the wire, where she hung suspended by her clothing for a few moments, then slipped from the barbed points to the ground. She did not move after falling, but lay there motionless.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF THE TANKS

THOUGH "Captain" Grace had not been hit, the concussion caused by the explosion of the German shell had barely missed killing her. Of course, being accustomed to terrific concussions made the shock to Grace a little less severe, but the blow was a hard one.

It was a long time before the Overton girl regained consciousness. Even then she was too dazed to think or to act, and it was not until a new sound reached her ears in the din of the battle that she began to collect her thoughts. It was the rumble, the rattle and the staccato exhaust of battle tanks that she heard and that aroused her to action.

"The—the tanks are coming!" she muttered, struggling to get up, but falling back weakly. "I shall be run down."

Grace lay still for some moments, then summoning all her strength sat up and waved her helmet. The effort was too much for her and she sank back unconscious.

A long row of tanks extending almost as far as the eye could reach in the haze stretched out parallel with the line of wire. They were wading on their way to the Hindenburg Line, through the barbed wire, crushing it, flattening it out with as little effort as a man would exert in trampling down a spear of wheat. One tank, headed in her direction, swerved a little. The observer had noted her movement and a machine gun was turned on her, but the gunner, at command of his superior, held his fire.

The tank waded slowly up and halted within a few yards of the unconscious girl, while the officer in command opened the door and peered out at her.

"It's a woman!" he cried, leaping out and bending over her. "An ambulance woman! What's she doing out here?"

He lifted her into the tank.

"She may be killed with us, but she can't live out there, that's certain."

There being no other place to put her, Grace was laid on the floor, the officer's coat under her head, and the huge tank rumbled on, grinding, crushing, jolting, swaying, poking its blunt nose into wide shell craters and creeping groaningly up and out upon the opposite sides.

Under all this racket and jolting Grace Harlowe soon regained consciousness. She sat up

and gazed about her wonderingly at first, then with sudden understanding.

"I'm in a tank!" she exclaimed. "I'm on my way through the Line!"

She realized too that the floor under her was unbearably hot, so she got unsteadily to her feet. No one observed her. All eyes were directed ahead and to the sides. Gunners were at their stations, and the lieutenant in command was peering through the observation slit.

Shells began to break about them. A companion tank was hit, so she heard one of the starboard gunners say. He had barely uttered the words when a German shell exploded so close to the tank she was in that the huge bulk trembled while shrapnel rattled on its deck.

The men in the tank held fast to the rail to prevent being thrown from their feet. After that the going was better for a distance. She was able to keep her footing and, being more sure of herself, edged her way toward the front.

The lieutenant in command wheeled sharply when he felt a light touch on his arm. He looked startled when he saw "Captain" Grace smiling up into his face.

"I see that I have been kidnapped, sir," she announced. "I am fortunate in two ways; the first is that you did not run over me, and the other is that I am having my first ride in a tank."

"You will wish you had been run over before you come to the end of this journey," retorted the lieutenant incisively. "What were you doing out in the wire?"

"Dragging wounded men back to a shell-hole, sir. My ambulance was blown up at the advanced dressing post, so I took the next best thing, and helped to handle a stretcher. My partner was killed, so I remained out and did what I could on the field."

"Humph! What do you think is going to happen to you now?"

"I am sure I don't know, sir. Probably the same thing that will happen to you, whatever that may be."

"Tank blown up by a mine," announced a gunner.

The lieutenant turned away from her to look out over the field to observe the effect of the explosion.

"May I ask how far you expect to go, sir?"

"Until we go through the Hindenburg Line or are blown up," he replied brusquely.

"Thank you," answered Grace quietly. "I presumed that those were your orders."

"You did, eh? Pardon me, I did not intend to be rude. We shall have to take you with us, though I fear you will be killed. When the firing begins you will please keep down. We occa-

sionally get small calibre bullets through the observation slits and the gun ports. There is no safe place in a tank in battle, but the floor is the best bet even if it is hot."

Grace thanked him and assured the lieutenant that she felt quite safe in the tank and would continue to feel so until the Huns registered a direct hit on it.

"You will have to pardon me now. I see we are getting along and so we shall soon be opening up."

"The best of luck, sir."

The officer turned to his observation slit, where he remained, moving only as he swayed with the rocking of the car. Now and then he would take a quick glance through the side apertures, occasionally giving a brief, curt command to the man at the steering wheel.

"Enemy tanks coming out, sir," announced Grace in a calm voice. She had been peering through a side aperture on the left of the car, and her quick eyes discovered the tops of other tanks approaching them, just topping a rise of ground.

"What?" demanded the lieutenant.

She pointed a finger in that direction and the lieutenant focused his glass on the point.

"Hold course!" he commanded, lowering the glasses. The approaching enemy tanks, unless

they changed their own course, would not come near enough to the big American tank to cause it any inconvenience. It was those big shells that worried the officer more than did the German tanks. He rather hoped the enemy would come out. In that event the Huns would not dare to fire on the American cars for fear of hitting their own. This Grace Harlowe understood also, reasoning that the enemy machines would stand by where they were and await developments.

Behind the American tanks, on either side of them, and in some instances ahead of them, were thin lines of little brown figures, that she knew belonged to advancing American infantry. It was a thrilling sight to Grace Harlowe even though she was in a way hardened to most phases of war. That is, she could observe them calmly and with a clear head for the appreciation of their military values. This scene, however, made her feel like waving her helmet and shouting encouragement to the little brown figures off there.

"Stand by! Trenches ahead," commanded the lieutenant.

The tank was about to go into action and Grace was to experience a phase of war new to her so far as her own actual participation in it was concerned. In a very few minutes after

that the one-pounder guns of the American tank opened up. Every shot was like a blow in the face to her. The concussion was so great that the Overton girl found herself stuffing her fingers in her ears, but, this becoming tiresome, she dropped her hands and took the blows that fell on her eardrums.

The one-pounders had a spiteful kick too, and it was not wise to get too close to them, but this did not prevent her from getting a peep now and then through a port, and occasionally through an observation slit. No one now gave heed to her presence, the tank's crew being too busy.

"Turn machine guns on the trench when we go over!" was the next order.

"Going over now. Let go!" was the next command.

Both starboard and port sides began firing their machine guns at the same instant. They raked the German trench with a withering fire, and though it had been pretty well emptied by the time the tank reached it, there were still enough Huns left in the trench to make ample fodder for the tank's guns.

Grace's feelings, as she analyzed them afterwards, were sad—sad that human beings must thus be sacrificed, even if those human beings were unscrupulous enemies. She saw other

tanks resting across the trench over which they had stopped, their guns performing a similar service. Here and there were tanks lying on their sides, others with great gaping holes in them, and still others on their backs, having either turned turtle or been blown over by mines or by exploding shells of large calibre. Those that were left were carrying on steadily, but Grace Harlowe knew full well that not many of them would ever go back.

The tank moved from the trench and lumbered on.

“One-pounder!” ordered the commander, whereupon the larger guns began their steady *bang! bang! bang!* and the rocking and rolling and groaning of the huge unwieldy instrument of war was resumed.

They had cleared the first enemy trench and were now inside the German lines, while the enemy tanks had deployed to the north, perhaps because of fear of the large fleet of American tanks.

The interior of Grace’s place of refuge was growing hotter and hotter. The men in the tank were down to their sleeveless undershirts, their faces blackened from powder and dust, through which ran threads of white made by rivulets of perspiration. Grace herself was perspiring and coughing. The powder fumes

blown back into the machine were, at times, almost overpowering. Her head was aching and her joints were sore, from the shock of the shell explosion that had laid her low out in the wire, and from the jolting she was getting in the wallowing tank.

Grace found her thoughts wandering to Tom Gray. She wondered if he were wishing he were out here, and for the moment she was thankful that he was not.

"No, I don't mean that," she rebuked herself. "I wish he were able to be here. He will be far to the front before we get on German soil, but it is possible that I shall not be here to know about it."

Grace realized her peril and knew that if she got out of the present situation alive it would not be much short of a miracle. Suddenly the tank stalled in a huge shell-crater. German artillerymen, informed of the fact by their observers, were feeling for the range three minutes later.

"Quick work," shouted the lieutenant admiringly. "We've got to get out of here before they make a hit. Warp it!"

The man at the wheel did "warp it," and the machine groaned as it bit into the earth, digging a canal in the bank of the shell-hole at its lowest point.

"She's getting her footing," announced the wheelman.

"There she goes!" cried the lieutenant. "Now let Jerry shoot up that shell-crater."

Jerry did. Within five minutes after they had cleared the crater, the German gunners planted a shell right in the middle of it. The lieutenant grinned as he glanced back at the volcano of dirt that was hovering in the air over the place where they had so recently been stalled. It had been a narrow escape. Had their departure from the shell-crater been delayed five minutes longer, not one of that little party would have survived, for the hit was a direct hit. A moving tank is not an easy mark to hit, but when the machine is standing still it presents a fair target.

Things were getting hotter with the moments and the line of tanks was growing thinner and thinner. "Why did they not turn back?" wondered Grace. Surely they could not hope to break the Hindenburg Line unaided, but she realized that it was a battle to the death, and that not a tank would turn back unless a runner overtook it and ordered it back.

Glancing back through the rear observation slit, Grace discovered a line of American troops coming up in open formation. The boys were on the way. She observed also that the tank in

which she was riding was the only one within a mile or more of that particular point, this tank having gradually drawn further to the north. The lieutenant in command supposedly knew where they were going, for the tanks in battle traveled by compass over a course carefully charted at headquarters when the battle plans were formed. There is little guesswork at any stage of the game in modern warfare, as Grace Harlowe thoroughly understood, but what she did not know was that the compass in their tank had become useless under the shocks of the heavy explosions.

Shells were deluging them, but the old machine appeared to bear a charmed life, not a shell having touched it or, with one exception, having struck close enough to it to greatly disturb the occupants. That the shells were coming closer to the tank, however, Grace could see, for she was seeing with the eyes of a trained observer. Now and then the commanding officer would glance at her, scowling with a grimy face, as if he resented her presence there. Grace answered these scowls with the bravest smile she could summon, though she had to admit to herself that there was not a genuine smile left in her.

It was immediately after one of these scowls, followed by a smile, that the big tank met its

fate. A mighty upheaval occurred directly beneath it. The tank rose up until it fairly stood on its tail, then fell back with a ripping crash. The guns were as suddenly silenced and not a voice was raised within the battle cruiser that had met its Waterloo over a German mine trap.

CHAPTER XV

A REGIMENT THAT LOST ITSELF

WHAT enemy shells had failed to accomplish, the mine trap had. Within the car gasoline fumes, mingling with powder fumes, soon became overpowering. The men of the crew lay where they had fallen, not a movement, not a sound, from any one of them. Grace, when the car had reared its nose into the air, was thrown to the rear with the lieutenant and wheelman. The gunners had clung to their weapons for support and now lay near them.

Back to the rear that thin brown line of American boys might have been seen creeping, now running, now dropping to earth and hugging the ground as shells from the Yankee guns passed over them and broke ahead of them.

The line of Yankee boys was up and coming the moment the wall of steel had cleared the way for them. They were the Blues of the 27th Division, though there was nothing blue about them on this occasion. Their faces, bronzed and rugged, wore the fierce expression that the American soldier knew so well how to assume when he was charging the enemy, this battle face having become a habit, as much a part of him as were his rifle and his bayonet. He couldn't fight without making up a face, and when he assumed his fighting face he meant business. It was a danger signal that many a Hun realized to his sorrow.

The captain of the leading company had seen the tank rear up, but had seen no one emerge from it, and this caused him to wonder if all had been killed in that modern engine of war. As he neared the scene he saw wisps of smoke filtering out through the gun ports of the machine. He called a lieutenant to him.

"Send a squad over to that tank as we go past. There may be some one alive in it. Gasoline burning in the car, I think."

The lieutenant stepped back and ordered a sergeant and his squad to go and look the tank over.

One of the squad upon reaching the wrecked tank pulled away the shattered side port and

then thrust his head in. The fumes inside were so suffocating that he hurriedly withdrew his head.

"Gas burning in there!" he gasped.

A puff of smoke through the open port verified his assertion. A second man thrust him aside and crawled in, dragging, as he backed out, one of the gunners. The sergeant went in next, and when he came out he brought with him the lieutenant who had been in command of the machine.

"I reckon he's gone West," declared the sergeant between coughs. "Get in there, one of you men. There are more of them in the rear end."

The next man who tried, failed and had to be carried out, but by this time the sergeant had recovered sufficiently to permit his making a second attempt. The sergeant brought out the limp form of "Captain" Grace and laid her down on the ground.

"It's a woman!" shouted a soldier.

"The officer is alive!" cried another who had been bending over the lieutenant. "Better get a surgeon up here."

"The woman's alive, too," added another of the Blues.

The sergeant by this time had re-entered the tank and rescued another man, who had been

the wheelman of the machine. One by one the others of the crew were brought out and laid on the ground, where soldiers got to work trying to revive them.

There were but two from that unfortunate tank who were brought out alive, Grace Harlowe and the commanding officer.

"The woman is in uniform. What is she?" demanded the captain.

"Ambulance woman, I think, sir," answered the sergeant.

"Queer place for an ambulance woman to be," growled the captain, and went on with his men.

"Captain" Grace and the tank lieutenant were carried to a deserted German dugout, where they were given first aid and then the squad went on to rejoin the regiment.

It was not until after the stretcher-bearers had come up and worked over the officer and the ambulance woman that either stirred. The lieutenant was first to regain consciousness, but was unable to collect himself sufficiently to speak. The shock had nearly finished him. Grace began to stir half an hour or so later, then opened her eyes and gazed into the face of a field surgeon who had just come up.

"Close your eyes and keep still," admonished the surgeon gruffly.

Grace did both. She could not have kept her eyes open had she wished to, for her eyelids were very heavy, and, as for speaking, she had nothing to say, that is, she could think of nothing at that moment. Her head was confused and she was conscious of an ache that reached from her head to the tips of her toes, though it was her head that gave her the most trouble.

"Shell-shock," declared the surgeon, turning to his other patient. "Let them both rest; then, as soon after dark as possible, get them back to the dressing station. That's the best we can do." The surgeon went away to attend to other sufferers.

Later in the morning he dropped in to see how Grace and the officer were getting along. He found both awake, but still more or less dazed.

"Who are you?" he demanded, eyeing "Captain" Grace narrowly.

"Grace Gray, ambulance driver. I was out in the wire assisting some of the wounded when I got put out by shock. This officer gathered me in and took me through with him, sir."

"I know you," exclaimed the surgeon, smiling. "Colonel Price spoke of you to me a few days ago, and told me how you got the two cars of wounded men through to Paris. Good work. Glad you are not wounded. You aren't as badly

shocked as your long period of unconsciousness led me to believe you were."

"Thank you, sir. How is the battle going?"

"Up to the present it isn't a battle, merely an engagement, though you would have difficulty in convincing the 'Blues' that it isn't a real battle. We have gained our objective and dug in. The plan, I believe, is for the Australians to come up, hurdle us and carry the war on. Our division is spread all along this front—and it's going through the Hindenburg Line," he added proudly.

Grace smiled in sympathy.

"I think I shall be able to get about soon, perhaps in another hour; then I'll go out and see what I can do in first aid."

"Better remain where you are. It's pretty hot outside. Besides, it is no place for a woman," added the surgeon.

Grace turned to the tank officer.

"I suppose, Lieutenant—I don't know what the rest of your name is—"

"Smith," he informed her. "Easy name to remember, eh?"

"Quite. As I was saying, I suppose you agree with the surgeon that this is no place for a woman?"

"I do."

"Your conception of woman's sphere is an

erroneous one, my dear sir. The great call to womanhood is to relieve suffering and carry sunshine into human hearts. I am not saying that they fulfill their mission completely, but they should."

"That is all very well in times of peace or behind the lines in wartime," agreed the lieutenant. "But this is war, and it is a man's game, not a woman's work."

"Then why not have left me where I was? From there I might have got back to the post. Here, I cannot."

"Humph! I suppose that is what I should have done, and what would have pleased you most."

"Lieutenant, you are not consistent. I do thank you for picking me up, as I undoubtedly would have been killed where I was. In the second place, I would not have missed that tank experience for anything, including the blow-up. By the way, what really did happen to us?"

"We ran onto a Hun mine-trap and the machine was blown up."

"Were—were any of the others—"

"All killed," answered the lieutenant grimly. "I understand that only three of our squadron—thirty odd tanks altogether—got through. They too may have been put out by this time. Do you not think it is a man's game?"

"Yes, a game for real men, and those who are in it are real men," she answered earnestly. "It was not of combat work that I spoke as I did, but of mercy work. The men maim and the women must heal. I think I shall get up now."

Grace stood up, but found that she was very dizzy. She leaned against the side of the dug-out, with her eyes closed and her face white and drawn. The officer, thinking she was about to fall, got up unsteadily to assist her.

"Please, please sit down," urged "Captain" Grace, opening her eyes and trying to smile at him. "I shall be all right in a moment; then I am going out. I should go now, but I could do nothing. My nerve machinery appears to have been disarranged, though it isn't the first time. You had best let the stretcher-men carry you back. To try to walk would upset you too much."

The officer said he was about to suggest the same thing to her.

"I will tell you what we will do. We will both go back as far as the first dressing post. From there we shall be able to get an ambulance for the rest of the way. Of course it would not be wise to try to do so at present, for the Boches will not be sufficiently mopped up. We never would get through were we to start now."

"You are a strategist, Mrs. Gray."

"Thank you. Were I one and in charge of this regiment, or if I were the authority that sent them out here, I believe I should have had reserves to protect the rear."

"You heard the surgeon say that the Aussies were coming up to do that, didn't you?"

"I did, but where are they?"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"We are on an isolated sector here," continued Grace. "Were I to venture to express an opinion, I should say that our position at this minute is a perilous one. Of course I do not know anything about military matters."

"There are many in this man's army with bars on their shoulders that know a great deal less, young woman. I think you have done me a lot of good. I am beginning to agree with your point of view. I feel equal to going out. If you will promise to remain here I will do so."

"I am ready," announced "Captain" Grace smilingly, as she adjusted her helmet.

"Orders for you to move up front, sir," announced a sergeant at the door of the dugout.

"You too, Miss."

"What is it, Sergeant?" questioned Grace.

"The regiment is isolated."

"Which means that we are surrounded, I presume," said the Overton girl, turning to the lieutenant, who nodded gravely.

CHAPTER XVI

A GLORIOUS STAND

“**Y**ES, Mrs. Gray, your vision apparently has become a reality,” agreed Lieutenant Smith.

“Litter-bearers will carry you up, sir, you and the lady. We are ordered to consolidate the position at once. The Boches are coming out of their holes like prairie dogs, and we must get up before their machine guns get to working,” announced the sergeant.

“I for one shall walk,” declared Grace with emphasis. “Let the litter-bearers carry in those who cannot walk. They are the ones who need attention. Lieutenant, you and I will have to support each other, with your permission, sir.”

“Drop the ‘Sir,’ Mrs. Gray. I shall be proud to have you call me ‘Buddy,’” urged the officer.

“Very good, Buddy. Let’s go!”

He extended his hand to her and pressed hers in a firm grip.

“Yes, let’s go,” said the lieutenant. “Ser-

geant, order your stretcher-men to gather up the more urgent cases."

It was an order. The sergeant saluted, executed a right-about and stalked from the dugout. Grace Harlowe's eyes glowed.

"What splendid fellows our doughboys are," she murmured.

The officer agreed with a nod, and together they left the dugout and turned toward the front.

A ridge of ground served to mask their approach, though in the far distance enemy observation balloons gently swayed high in the skies. Of course the observers up there saw the woman and the man, as Grace well knew that they did, but the Huns were rather busy that day because the Americans were keeping them so.

The whereabouts of this regiment of Blues, as they were known back in the States, was unknown to headquarters. The last that had been seen of them was when they disappeared in the direction of the Hindenburg Line, but now between them and the main American line there were thousands of enemy troops and a wall of falling steel besides. The situation looked desperate for the plucky regiment.

Under the ridge that the Blues were now occupying were dugouts, with a system of trenches

that really were the beginning of the outworks of the German line, terminating in the St. Quentin tunnel. There might be mines there too, though none had exploded as yet.

Grace and her companion gained the protection of the ridge without disaster, though they had some narrow escapes. They were directed into a hole in the ground where the regimental commander had established his headquarters, and to him Lieutenant Smith reported and asked for assignment. Colonel Mortimer was very glad to have his assistance, as many of the officers of the regiment had been killed or wounded on that great drive.

The lieutenant beckoned to Mrs. Gray, who had been standing back at attention during the brief conversation.

"May I introduce Mrs. Gray, Colonel? Ambulance driver who has done great service in this war, I am informed."

"Yes, so I understand. I think I have heard your name mentioned, Mrs. Gray, but I am not certain in what connection. How do you happen to be here?"

Lieutenant Smith explained for her.

"Sorry," said the colonel, shaking his head. "It is not a good place for a woman, at least not in the present circumstances."

"I can be of some assistance to you, Colonel,

either on the field or in your dressing stations, and I can bear one end of a litter should you need litter-bearers.”

The colonel shook his head.

“Not on the field, young woman. I couldn’t have you doing that. If you wish to serve elsewhere I shall very much appreciate your assistance. Can you give first aid?”

“Yes, sir. I can do almost anything along those lines.”

“Mrs. Gray wears the *Croix de Guerre*, sir,” the lieutenant informed his superior. “Your senior surgeon has told me something of her past performances, and therefore I unhesitatingly recommend her for whatever duties you may wish her to assume.”

“Very good. I will have an orderly conduct you to the dressing station. You are quite certain that you will not faint, Mrs. Gray?”

“No, sir; not unless I get another smack such as I got in Lieutenant Smith’s tank.”

“I understand you expected the Aussies to support you?” questioned the lieutenant.

“They are due here now. My messengers inform me that we are cut off, however, and that our support will have difficulty in reaching us, if they make it at all. It looks to me very much as though this regiment will have to fight an army. Our fellows will do it, sir—do it to the

last man, and glory in the opportunity to show the Boches the stuff that the American soldier is made of."

Messengers were hurrying in with reports, many of them wearing blood-stained bandages, their eyes glowing, uniforms torn from contact with barbed wire, ragged and dirty, but snapping to attention with as much precision as though they were on duty in a summer encampment on the Hudson. The eyes of the Overton girl glowed with pride as she watched them. An orderly soon entered, and was directed to escort her to the dressing station, which he did. This station was in their rear, on the westerly side of the low ridge, but the regiment had entrenched itself on the eastern or enemy side, and was still digging in. At the same time the westerly side was prepared for defense, for the enemy in their rear might descend upon them at any time.

Squads of men could be seen off to the rear, mopping up German dugouts with bayonets and bomb, cleaning out nest after nest of them that had been left behind when the Blues passed over. It was desperate work and the end was not yet in sight.

The surgeon, who had attended Grace and the lieutenant, was busy with sleeves rolled up to the shoulders, working over a wounded dough-

boy, nor did he look up until he had finished with his work on that case.

"You're here, are you?" he demanded, straightening up and heaving a deep sigh.

"Yes, sir. I wish to assist you."

"Can you give an anesthetic?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do so until my assistant returns."

Grace stripped off her blouse, rolled her own sleeves up and began work. Not once did the surgeon have to direct her. She seemed to understand his needs and requirements and to supply them before he could formulate them in words. It was not until late in the afternoon that his assistant returned, having been busy on the field to the rear.

"Thank you! You are a woman worth while. You will now go get some rest. That is an order. Your face is ghastly. Know where to go?"

"I—I think I can find a place," stammered Grace, so exhausted that she could barely speak.

The place she found proved to be in the open, on the slope of the bank, where she settled down weak and trembling, and sank into a heavy sleep. Grace as she slept stirred uneasily, but did not awaken when some one tucked a soldier's blouse under her head. Battle was raging over and about her, and the ground trem-

bled under her, but none of this disturbed the Overton ambulance driver, nor did she awaken for hours.

When Grace finally opened her eyes it was night. At first she could not collect her thoughts sufficiently to think where she was. It came to her a moment later. Flashings as of many thunder storms lighted the sky accompanied by detonating crashes, while overhead many star-shells hung suspended, swaying as they floated slowly toward the earth.

Grace crept up and peered over the crest toward the enemy lines. Men were fighting everywhere within range of her vision. They had stopped neither for rest nor for food since they arrived at their objective that morning.

"Wonderful!" breathed "Captain" Grace. "Only death can defeat such men as those; their spirit cannot be broken. I wonder if the reserves have come up? Lieutenant Smith!" She had caught sight of her rescuer's figure outlined in the light of an exploding shell.

"Eh? Where are you?"

"Here. I have been asleep. Don't let me detain you, but please tell me how the battle is going?"

"The Blues are fighting like wildcats, that's how."

"Have the Aussies come up?"

“No. We’re isolated and may be wiped out. Something must have gone amiss in the plans and our people have forgotten us. What are you doing out here?”

“I have been sleeping for hours, it seems. The anesthetic, I think, rather did me up.”

“Humph! Fine place to sleep. Can anything upset you?”

“Oh, yes, sir, I was considerably upset when I came out. Where do you think I can be of most assistance now, in the dressing station or outside?”

“The greatest need is for first aid on the field, but I hope you will not go out. It is almost certain death. We are losing our littermen about as fast as we can send them out. Perhaps the colonel may have something that you can do. My advice, however, would be that you crawl in a hole and sleep while you may. Later on, if we are still alive, we may all be prisoners in the hands of the Huns.”

“It will not be the first time that I have been in the hands of the Boches, sir. Tell me, if you will, where our casualties are—I mean those who have not had attention.”

“To the rear, principally. They are scattered back there. Ahead of us they are bunched and thus easier to find.”

“Then I will go to the rear, sir—after you

pass on," she added. "If you do not see me go you can't order me back."

Uttering an exclamation under his breath, Lieutenant Smith strode away. Grace got up at once and started toward the dressing station. It was her plan to fall in with the litter-bearers and go out on the field.

"Buddies, I am to go out with you and give first aid," she informed two soldiers who had just put down their burden outside the station.

"What?" demanded one peering into her face. "Woman, aren't you?"

"Yes, Buddy. First aid work is my part in this show. I'll go out with you."

They started away without replying. Grace followed them, and the three soon were searching about for "cases" which ordinarily could be found without difficulty, for the wounded men who were able to do so, guided them by calling out. It was those who could not call out that Grace felt needed her aid the most.

"Buddies, where are the Boches?" she demanded, stepping up to the stretcher-bearers.

"Their rear lines are about a kilometer back. Plenty of them left on the field out here in their holes. What do you propose to do?"

"Look up the bad cases. When you come out I'll have them located so you can take them in without loss of time. Will that help?"

“It’ll help them,” was the terse reply.

The litter-bearers started in with a wounded man, and Grace was left alone with the wounded—and perhaps with the enemy.

Shell-holes were her field of operation, for it was into these that men ordinarily crawled after being wounded, and there they were more than likely to be overlooked in the darkness. She carried two canteens filled with water, and should these become exhausted there was plenty of water in springs on the field that might be found with little searching.

There were five men in the first shell-crater that she explored, three of whom were seriously wounded. They had given themselves such first aid as they could, but needed immediate attention.

“Buddies, just as soon as I can get the litter-men here, I’ll have you out, but you must be patient. We are in a tight fix here, and none of us may get out of it. If you need anything, yell. If you can’t yell, ask one of your buddies to do it for you. I shall be somewhere about.”

They thanked her in the gruff manner of the fighting men, and Grace climbed out and into the storm of battle.

She did not call out, considering that it would not be prudent to do so, and it was well that she did not, as she discovered a few minutes later,

but crept about cautiously on her search for wounded men. "Captain" Grace found plenty of evidences of the recent presence of Germans and German cruelty, including two litter-bearers who had been bayoneted while at their work of mercy.

"Oh, the savagery of it!" she cried. "Beasts like that will yet be begging for mercy. How I wish I were a man. Hark!"

Low-spoken voices attracted her attention. They were German voices.

"Boches!" breathed the girl.

They were at their work, evidently having come out of a dugout to operate while the coast was clear. In the light of a star-shell she saw them plainly, five men with clubbed rifles looking for wounded doughboys to dispatch.

Grace hurriedly crept back to the shell-crater where she had first found some of her own troops lying wounded.

"Buddies!" she called softly.

Her hail was answered.

"Are any of you boys able to handle a rifle?"

Two of them said they were, but that having leg wounds they could not get up to do anything.

"I can assist you up to the top of the bank if you will do the rest. A squad of Boches are after the wounded less than a hundred yards from here."

A savage growl answered her.

"Give me a lift, I'll fix 'em!" raged a soldier.

"Easy now, don't be too ambitious. I can get at least two of you to the top of the crater, but you must not be imprudent. There are at least five of those fellows, and probably many more about here. If you draw attention to yourselves you may be treated as they are treating our fellows over there."

"Help us up!"

This the Overton girl did by the exertion of all her strength and causing considerable pain to the two men, which they bore without flinching. Next Grace handed their rifles to them.

"Wait until you get a good sight, then give it to the fiends!" she whispered. "Shoot fast and make them think they are attacked, but wait for a star-shell so you can see what you are doing. When they run away, observe where they go, so we can tell our moppers-up. I'm going away now."

Grace crept from the scene on all fours until she considered it prudent to get up and proceed with her work of mercy.

CHAPTER XVII

IN DESPERATE STRAITS

GRACE did not see, she did not wish to see the result of the mopping up performed by those two wounded dough-boys. It was enough for her that she had done her duty in that direction. It was all she could do, however, to keep from snatching up a rifle and going to their assistance in punishing the merciless Boches, but being a non-combatant she could not do it.

After having worked with the wounded for more than an hour, "Captain" Grace finally got back to the shell-crater.

"Anyone left here?" she called down.

"Yes. One of us is here," answered a weak voice.

"What luck?"

"Got 'em."

"All of them?"

"Yes. My buddy got smacked while he was doing it, so I had to finish the job."

"Where is he?"

"Litter-men took him in. Guess he is pretty

badly off. Litter-men took in the rest of the fellows and promised to come back for me.”

“Buddy, you have earned my attention. I’ll see if I can find a litter and get you out. How long have you been down here?”

“Most all night.”

Grace fixed him up as well as she could, and went out to look for the litter-bearers. A few minutes later he was on his way to the dressing station. Grace saw him the following morning, pale and weak, but with the fighting spirit of his regiment undimmed.

All that night the Blues fought, now and then pausing to take a few nibbles at the tasteless hardtack and a swig at their canteens. Morning found them still fighting. The Australians had not come up, and the enemy was fighting desperately to drive out the volunteer regiment. All through the day the battle continued, with heavy casualties on both sides. Had it not been that the enemy was fully engaged on other portions of the line they would have thrown in more men and quickly annihilated the little band. That and their own prowess, for they were fighting more than twice their number, saved the Blues, had saved them up to that time.

When darkness fell on the second day the Blues were exhausted, hollow-eyed and savage, though they smiled with their faces, not with

their eyes, when "Captain" Grace spoke to them.

A conference was being held in the colonel's dugout when Grace entered it by mistake in searching for a quiet spot in which to lie down. She saluted and started to withdraw when the colonel beckoned to her.

"Come in, Mrs. Gray," he called. "Did you wish something?"

"Only a soft spot for a few moments' rest," she answered wearily.

"Lie down on the blankets in the corner. I have been looking for you. Gentlemen, here is the bravest woman in the world. I mean exactly that and nothing else," said the officer.

"Thank you, but I do not quite deserve that praise. May I ask what our situation is?"

"Bad! No word from the Aussies, ammunition running low and half the regiment on the casualty list, though several hundred of those not seriously wounded are fighting."

"How long can we hold out?"

The officers gazed curiously at the pale-faced girl who was quizzing their commander. Nothing like it had ever occurred in their experience, but knowing him and his kindly instincts as they did, they understood in a way.

"So long as there is a man left and a rifle for him to fire!"

“Thank God no human agency has been or ever will be found that can kill the glorified spirit and devotion to duty that our doughboys have shown, Colonel,” breathed Grace Harlowe fervently.

The colonel swallowed hard, but did not reply.

“May I make a suggestion? I believe I could get through the lines back of us and carry a message for you.”

“Mrs. Gray, five men—five brave, resourceful fellows thought the same as you do. They have not returned. It is improbable they will.”

“I believe I can do it, sir. I have been through the German lines before. Let me have an hour’s sleep and I’ll do it.”

The officer shook his head slowly.

“I can’t do it. It is splendid of you to offer it, but I shall have to decline. Thank you just the same.”

“How much longer will your ammunition last, sir?”

“At the present rate of firing we shall be on our last round before to-morrow at this time.”

Grace made a brief mental calculation.

“A runner should make it before daylight,” she murmured reflectively.

“What’s that?” demanded the colonel with a rising inflection in his voice.

"I was speaking to myself, sir. I was figuring how long it should take a runner to get through, provided he made it. I am certain that it can be done," urged the girl eagerly.

"We will not discuss the subject further," answered the officer a little coldly.

Grace drew herself up and saluted.

"Thank you for reminding me, sir. My zeal led me to say more than I should have said." The Overton girl executed a right-about face and left the dugout. She had been rebuffed, and the rebuff hurt, though she needed no one to tell her that she deserved it. Her position was that of a private, and she had been making suggestions to a colonel.

"I don't care, I had my say," she declared by way of comforting herself. "He won't send anyone because he cannot afford to lose another man; he won't let me go because I am a woman. Always that sex question! How I do wish I were a man, just for one little while."

While Grace was searching for a dugout into which to crawl, the colonel and his officers were discussing her. Had she heard their words of praise she would have felt less humiliated over the rebuke that had been administered to her.

"I don't believe we are where we should be," reflected "Captain" Grace. "Let me see, I wonder if I could give one a definite idea as to

where we are? I wish I might see Lieutenant Smith.” Grace decided to wait outside the headquarters hole in the ground, hoping that the tank lieutenant might soon come out.

It was nine o’clock that night when he left the conference, but Grace was still waiting for him.

“I missed my nap, Lieutenant. I got to wondering where we are, anyway, and in wondering I forgot that I was sleepy. Now truly, can you tell where this regiment is? You will pardon my seeming familiarity, but I have been wondering if the Aussies really know where to look for us.”

“Step into the dressing station and I will show you where we are.”

He spread out his own map and placed a finger on it as indicating the present position of the regiment, while Grace with wrinkled forehead studied the map critically.

“Where is the ridge, sir? It doesn’t show at that point on the contour. Should it not show?”

“Yes, of course. That’s odd. I will have to ask the colonel about that.”

“Of course I do not know very much about contour maps, but were I reading this one I should infer from it that we were now at that point.” She indicated with her forefinger a

spot on the map several miles to the south of where they were supposed to be.

Lieutenant Smith studied the map with great care. He finally raised his eyes. There was concern in his own eyes.

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Gray. The landmarks on the map, while bearing a general resemblance to the point where we are, most certainly do not correspond with our present position. It is a wonder to me that we are as near the mark as we are. Colonel Mortimer should not be blamed for it. If ever a man had a terrible weight on his shoulders it is he. Thank you. I will bring the matter to his attention at once."

"I do not suppose it would be possible for him to work north and form a junction with the Australians, should it prove that we are in the wrong place?"

"No hope of it at all, Mrs. Gray."

"Then we shall have to stay here and fight it out until—"

"Exactly. Pardon me, but you must excuse me."

"Good night, sir," called Grace as he hurried toward the headquarters dugout.

"That woman can ask questions like a lawyer, but she has a head, she has a head," muttered the now thoroughly disturbed tank com-

mander. The information that he conveyed to his superior officer was a shock to Colonel Mortimer, who, after studying the contour map and discussing it with his officers, came to the conclusion that the regiment was in the wrong place. Further confirmation was had of this when, later in the night, officers who had been sent out to investigate, reported that certain definite landmarks were not to be found and that the regiment undoubtedly had missed its objective.

This news was discouraging; it was an anxious moment for the commanding officer, with the lives of a regiment of men depending upon him and his decision. The perspiration stood out in glistening beads on his forehead, not that he cared for himself, which he did not, but he loved the regiment, he worshiped the spirit that inspired men to perform the deeds that those soldier boys had performed.

“We’ll stick it out as long as there’s a man left. That’s all we can do,” he decided. “See that the men expose themselves as little as possible in the daytime, save their ammunition, and when they use it shoot to kill. We may not be rescued in several days, if at all.”

Some one suggested that they try to get another runner through; that perhaps the other runners had gone through and relief had gone

to the objective where the regiment was supposed to be.

"Very good. Send two men," agreed the colonel.

An orderly stepped into the dugout and saluted.

"Message for Colonel Mortimer," he said, extending a crumpled sheet of paper, which the colonel spread out and peered at in the flickering candle light. He read it through twice, then read it out loud to his officers. They listened in amazement to the reading of the message, which was as follows:

"Colonel Mortimer,

"Commanding, etc.

"Sir: Knowing the position the regiment is in, I am going to try to get through as your messenger, informing whatever command I first make contact with that you are holding out here and that you will continue to hold out until your ammunition is exhausted. For that reason alone you need assistance. I believe I can get through. At any rate I can better be spared than any of your force.

"GRACE H. GRAY."

CHAPTER XVIII

“CAPTAIN” GRACE DARES TO DO

“**T**HE woman must be crazy,” observed a major.

“She will fail. She does not know that we are in the wrong place,” interjected the colonel. “Women are so headstrong. Furthermore, she never can hope to get through.”

“Beg pardon, sir, but it was Mrs. Gray who called my attention to our present position,” spoke up Lieutenant Smith. “She quizzed me and inveigled me into showing her the map, which I did willingly, knowing her to be all right. I understand now why she was asking so many questions. She had this plan in mind then. How she suspected that we were not where we thought we were I do not presume to explain, but a woman’s intuition sometimes is almost uncanny.”

“Are the messengers to go through just the same, sir?” asked the major.

“Yes. Please start them at once, of course with the new information as to our position.”

“The woman undoubtedly will be killed or

captured," decided the major, rising to leave the conference.

"I am not so certain of that, Major," differed Lieutenant Smith. "It is my belief that, should she meet up with Boches, she will talk them down even though she cannot shoot them down."

The colonel called for his orderly and demanded to know where he got the message. The orderly informed him that it had been brought in by a litter-bearer to whom Mrs. Gray had given it out on the field an hour earlier.

"Hm-m-m! She took no chances of being stopped by us," observed the colonel dryly. "I pray that she may get through alive, but all the chances are against her."

They were, and no one understood this more clearly than did Grace Harlowe Gray, but she possessed a wonderful self-confidence, bred of years of out-door experience and familiarity with nature, which was of very great assistance to her now. Then again, Tom Gray was a for-ester and he had taught her to read not only contour maps, but forest trails, and to find her way about when most persons would be hopelessly lost. Always having had a keen sense of direction—bird sense, Tom Gray called it—she found little difficulty in laying her course in the right direction on this occasion.

Instead of following a direct course to the rear, Grace bore a few degrees to the north, believing that the Australians would be found in that direction.

With eyes and ears alert Grace hurried on, now and then throwing herself down to avoid a squad of enemy soldiers bent on some mission that would not bear the light of day, here and there dodging into a shell-hole when a larger body of men appeared to be bearing down on her position. It was nerve-trying work, but not once during the journey did "Captain" Grace permit herself to become panicky.

Once during the journey she was held up in a shell-crater for more than an hour when a squad of Boches camped on the edge of the crater to discuss the division of spoils that they had taken from wounded American soldiers. She learned that these Huns were billeting in a dugout just beyond, and that they were going further on for reconnoitering work.

Grace decided that she would do some reconnoitering on her own account, and when finally they got up and went on she scrambled out and started on a run toward the rear. Finding the Hun dugout, the Overton girl cautiously crept in, after first listening to make certain that there were no occupants. Using her flash lamp discreetly she soon satisfied herself that what

she was in search of was not there. However, there were other similar holes in the ground all about. Several of these she visited, finally obtaining from the lot what she wished—a German uniform and helmet.

It was not much of a fit, and, were she to be caught in it, "Captain" Grace was well aware that she would never leave the field alive. The death of a spy would be her lot. That thought did not disturb her greatly, though it caused her to exercise greater caution.

The test came unexpectedly.

Grace was going along at a brisk jog when she was hailed by a German voice demanding to know who and what she was.

"Messenger with orders," answered the girl in German, uttering the words in a hoarse voice well down in her throat, hoping devoutly that the voice might not reveal that she was a woman. Fortunately for her, it did not, and the words "messenger" and "orders" satisfied the inquisitive Hun. Grace slowed down instantly she was well clear of the fellow.

"That was a close shave," she muttered. "O!"

Ahead of her was wire. From her position flat on the ground where she had thrown herself when a shell exploded ahead of her, she discovered the entanglement. That meant, in all

probability, that there were enemy troops somewhere in the immediate foreground.

Not a sound did she hear as indicating that her surmise was correct. After a little she crept on, using extreme caution, finally sinking down on a little mound of earth when a light broke in the skies overhead, a star-shell fired from either enemy or friendly lines, she was unable to determine which.

German voices, that seemed to be underneath her, suddenly set all her senses on the alert. Several moments elapsed before Grace solved the mystery. The solution startled her. The voices were directly underneath her, and Grace discovered that she was lying prone on the top of an enemy machine-gun nest, the concrete structure having been camouflaged with dirt and sod. She then recalled having passed other similar humps in the ground and wondered that she had not been discovered.

"They must have seen me," muttered Grace, "and it must have been the uniform that saved me. I am in luck to-night. The next question is, how am I to get through that wire?"

Still resting on the German machine-gun nest she considered the situation, now observing many such protuberances on the landscape, which indicated to her that the enemy had planted there scores of machine-gun nests.

Whether or not most of them had been mopped up by the American troops she had no way of knowing. It was the prudent thing to take for granted that every hummock hid a squad of Boche machine-gunners.

Grace Harlowe proceeded on this theory. By the light of star-shells and real shells she discovered that channels had been cut through the wire ahead of her, plainly by tanks that had mowed the wire down. Islands dotted the sea of wire, open spaces where there was no wire. These she knew were traps on which enemy machine guns had been, and perhaps still were, trained, to catch unwary soldiers who entered the islands because they offered easier going.

A new moon was casting lights and shadows on the scene, so Grace concluded to wait until it went down, though her position was a little too conspicuous to suit her purposes. She flattened herself on the ground and lay waiting, exercising all the patience possible, now and then catching snatches of sentences from the Germans underneath that enlightened her as to why they were there. The Americans were looked for to cross the wire at this point.

“If I can get across first, these fiends will have no machine-gun fodder,” muttered “Captain” Grace. She also learned from their conversation, that there were Germans lurking in

holes and pill-boxes—concrete underground structures—out there in the wire.

At last the moon dipped. Grace was off, creeping on all fours, within the next few seconds, believing that her chances now, before the enemy had adjusted their eyes to the changed light, were much better than would be the case five or ten minutes hence. Her reasoning was good, and so was her luck, for she gained the wire without attracting the attention of the Hun gunners.

Crawling through the field of wire was another thing. At every move her clothing ripped and her hands were scratched. When possible Grace took advantage of the "islands," trusting to her own skill to avoid detection in crossing them. She avoided shell-craters and every other spot that looked as though it might harbor enemy patrols.

"This is the original rough and rugged way," muttered "Captain" Grace, lying flat on the ground for a few moments while the scene was lighted by a star-shell. She observed that it had been fired from the direction of the American lines. This knowledge gave her renewed courage, and she pressed on as rapidly as the obstacles permitted, but without relaxing in the slightest degree the caution that she had been observing. Once through this wire-field, Grace

believed that she would be safe, but it seemed never-ending, though she knew she was taking a direct course across it.

There was little fire to bother her, and not a single shot from the enemy in the machine-gun nests, for it was not their plan to disclose their positions until they had enough men to shoot at to make it worth while.

Once more Grace was obliged to flatten herself on a bed of thorns to avoid detection as another light soared aloft. This lying down in the barbed wire was the most trying experience she had been through, and Grace permitted an exclamation to escape her.

"If some one did not hear that I shall be much surprised," she complained, getting on her hands and feet and resuming her perilous journey. Another exclamation escaped her when she barely saved herself from falling into a crater that she had not seen in time, and the Overton girl made haste to get away from that danger spot. She had gone but a few yards when she came to the sudden realization that some one was behind her. Grace turned just in time to see a man with a clubbed rifle standing over her, but ere she could utter a word the butt of the rifle crashed down on her head and Grace collapsed, uttering a low moan, and lay motionless where she had fallen.

CHAPTER XIX

AT HER JOURNEY'S END

“**W**HERE am I?”

Grace sat up and gazed about her. She was on a cot in a dugout, that much she realized in her first waking glance. There were other cots there, and a surgeon was examining the tags on the men, these tags indicating the nature of their wounds and where they were to be taken. It was an American dressing station, an evacuation post, as she discovered almost instantly.

The realization of this filled the heart of “Captain” Grace with joy.

“Lieutenant!” she called in an excited voice. The surgeon turned sharply.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” was his terse response.

“I must see a line officer at once.”

“You will see one in good time. I understand you were picked up coming from the German lines.”

Grace’s face flushed at the implication.

“Will you listen to me, sir? I am a runner. I have a message for headquarters that means

the saving or the loss of a whole regiment. I must have attention." Grace dragged herself from the cot and tried to stand up, but fell back half fainting. She wondered what was the matter with her head. It felt unusually large and darting pains were shooting through and through it. She placed a hand to her head, the mere touch of which caused her to groan.

"You say you are a runner?" demanded the surgeon.

"Yes, sir. Won't you please send for some one or let me go with an orderly? This means life or death!"

"I'll send for some one," replied the surgeon. "I am ordered to hold you here for investigation."

"Hurry, hurry!"

Grace sank back dizzy and sick. Up to this point she had not reflected over her position or how she got there. All at once she recalled the figure that she had seen towering over her out there in the wire, the upraised rifle, and then—darkness.

"I must have been struck with the butt of the soldier's rifle," she murmured. "If that be true, how did I come here? Lieutenant, may I ask where I am?"

"You may not," he returned shortly.

"Thank you. You are most considerate."

The surgeon did not even look at her. She had observed, however, that he had summoned an orderly and sent him away with a message.

A few moments passed, then an officer entered the dugout. He was a captain.

"Where is the woman?" he demanded brusquely.

The surgeon pointed to Grace, whereupon the officer stepped over and stood frowning down upon her.

"Are you the woman who was taken while trying to get into the American lines?" he demanded.

"I am. Are you a line officer?"

"Yes. What do you wish to say?"

"That Colonel Mortimer and the Blues are surrounded seven kilometers from the objective that they were supposed to reach. They are south of the indicated objective, and have only enough ammunition to last them a few hours, but they are fighting like wild men."

"Who are you?" demanded the captain.

"Grace Gray, ambulance driver. My car was blown up at Post Seven, night before last, whereupon I went out with the litter-men to give what assistance I could, for they were short-handed owing to many having been killed or wounded."

"How did you chance to be with the Blues?"

Grace explained that she had been in the wire when she was put out by shock, that she had been picked up by a tank in command of Lieutenant Smith, with whom she went on until the tank met with disaster; that she and the commanding officer, the sole survivors from the tank, had been picked up by the Blues and "stood on their feet," as Grace expressed it.

"A most remarkable story," observed the officer, plainly skeptical, though some of the things she mentioned were landmarks that the officer recognized.

"Has it not occurred to you that Colonel Mortimer would be most unlikely to send a woman on a mission of this sort, that he would not have sent a verbal message unless it were impossible to write one, at least to send his signature?"

"Colonel Mortimer did not send me. I came after he had refused his permission for me to go. He already had sent out several runners, but did not believe they had succeeded in getting through. Just before I left he directed that two more be sent out. If they have arrived, they have verified all that I have told you; if they have not, all the more reason why you should consider carefully the message I bring. Can't you see, sir, that I am an American, that I have suffered everything but going

West to get here? Those men must have support or they are lost, sir!" she cried raising herself on one elbow.

"A most extraordinary story, Mrs. Gray. I will investigate it, of course, but in the meantime you will be held for investigation. How long have you been in the service?"

"Since the early spring. I came over with the Overton College unit and have been on or near the line most of the time since arriving in France. Don't investigate too much, Captain. Act! Pardon my adopting this tone to you, but it is urgent that something be done. Unless word is gotten to the Aussies they will not find the Blues, and they cannot hold out many hours longer. I beg of you to do something."

The officer regarded her thoughtfully for a few seconds, then turning on his heel he hurriedly left the dugout. Grace sank back exhausted.

"Lieutenant, what hit me?" she questioned when she observed the surgeon looking down at her.

"I understand that the butt of a rifle in the hands of a husky doughboy came in contact with your head, Madam. He saw you in the wire, and being in a German uniform, wearing a German helmet, he smacked you with the butt of the rifle. Lucky for you that he didn't kill

you. The blow surely would have sent you West had it not been for the helmet. That was all that saved you. I heard what you said to the captain. If the half of it is true, you ought to have the Congressional medal, but if it isn't true—"

"The firing squad," Grace finished for him. "I agree with you as to the latter statement. It is all true, sir, and you know it is."

"I am inclined to believe it is. Where is your station?"

"Field Hospital Number One."

"Ah! Who is the commanding officer there?"

"Major Price."

"Why didn't you tell that to the captain?" demanded the surgeon, now somewhat aroused.

"I did not think of it. My mind is somewhat confused from the rap I got, then again I was too eager to convince him that the Blues were in a desperate situation."

"I'll see if I can reach him," announced the surgeon. Calling a messenger he sent a note to the captain, advising him to call up the field hospital for identification of the prisoner, for Grace Harlowe Gray was a prisoner, and she knew it full well, a prisoner in her own lines. "Captain Barton is an Intelligence Officer," he informed her. "If you have been about the

front all this time you must expect such men to be suspicious of every person who does other than normal things.”

Grace grinned.

“I hope this bump isn’t going to lay me up, sir.”

“I do not think so. I should, however, advise you to lay off for a day or two, at least until the swelling is somewhat reduced.”

“Are any ambulances from Number One running to this station?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think I can be spared to go in on one of them,” she questioned half whimsically.

“That will depend upon what Captain Barton decides to do with you,” replied the surgeon gravely. “Here is the messenger now. What is it?”

“Captain Barton left the station hurriedly just before I reached his office,” announced the orderly saluting.

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders.

“You understand, Mrs. Gray?”

“Yes. That being the case, I think I will try to get some sleep,” announced Grace.

“Just a moment, please. I will treat the bump on your head first, then you are welcome to go to sleep if you think you can sleep in this place.”

"I can sleep anywhere. Thank you."

"I shall have to ask you to give me your pledge that you will not try to leave. I am responsible for you. You understand my position?"

"Perfectly, sir. I promise that I shall not leave this dugout without first speaking to you," answered Grace, then promptly dropped off to sleep.

It was in the small hours of the morning that she was awakened by loud talking in the dugout. Her next conscious thought was that a familiar voice was speaking.

"Awful mess," the voice was saying. "Machine guns along the roads, dead Boches and live Boches everywhere. Worst mix-up of the whole war. Any news?"

The surgeon shook his head, casting a quick glance toward the cot, and grinning when he discovered that the prisoner-patient was wide awake and staring at the newcomer.

"Hello, Jimmy Baldwin," called "Captain" Grace, having recognized in the visitor an old friend and fellow-ambulance driver.

Jimmy wheeled sharply.

"Eh? What's this? Who are you?"

"You should know me by this time."

"Well, by all the statutes of Potsdam, if it isn't 'Captain' Grace!" exclaimed Jimmy step-

ping over and grasping both of Grace's hands. "Slacking, eh? So that's the way you drive an ambulance, is it?" Then discovering the lump on her head, Jimmy suddenly changed his tone. "You have been hurt? I heard that you were missing. What happened?"

"A friendly doughboy hit me over the head with the butt of a rifle," answered Grace smiling a little wanly, though the color had come into her face when Jimmy began speaking.

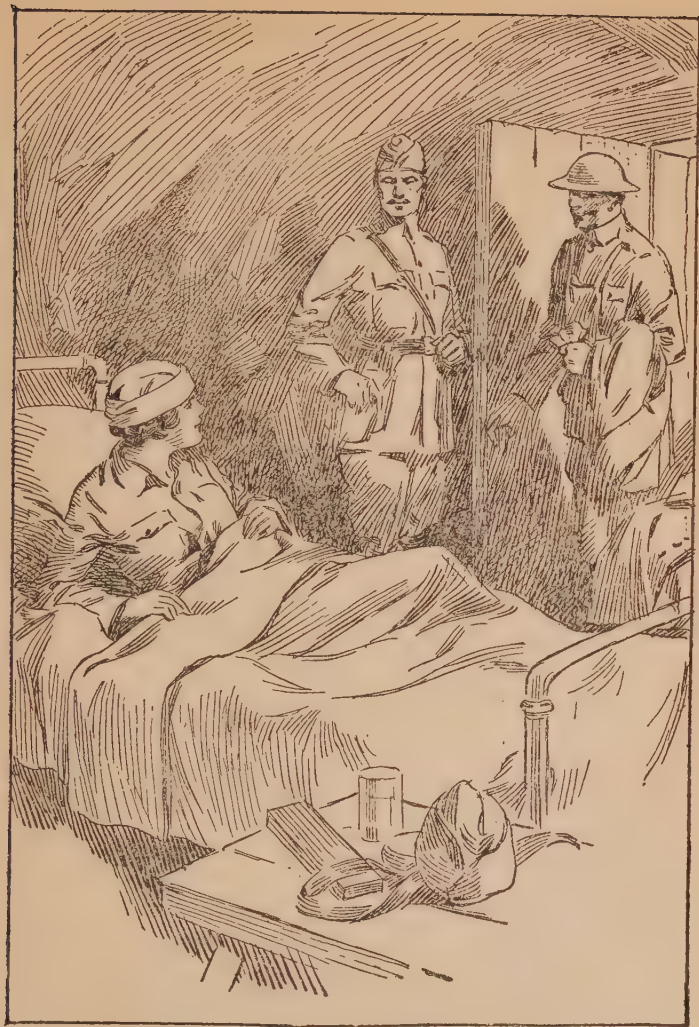
"Do you know this woman, Mr. Baldwin?" interjected the surgeon.

"Know Grace Harlowe Gray? Ask me something that isn't so easy. Who doesn't know her? Ask me that and you'll have given me a poser. Of course I know her. What's the joke?"

"The surgeon is trying to establish my identity. You see I am being detained as a suspicious person, Jimmy."

"Don't doubt it, don't doubt it. Almost anybody who pulled off the stunts that you do would be sent to jail for life—granting that he or she escaped the firing squad. Doc, this young woman is all right. If Major Price hears that she is being detained as a suspicious character, he'll have a court-martial on you."

"I am acting under Captain Barton's orders, Baldwin."



“Hello, Jimmy Baldwin!”

"Where's Barton?" demanded Jimmy impulsively. "I'm only a corporal, but what's rank when it comes to a friend being in trouble?"

"Called away on an important matter. Perhaps Mrs. Gray will enlighten you."

"What have you been up to this time, 'Captain' Grace?" demanded Jimmy.

"Caught coming from the German lines."

"Is that all? Why, visiting the Boche at home has become a habit with you. Didn't suppose anyone would give a second thought to your going over the line. Let's have the story."

Grace gave it to him briefly.

"Good yarn," he observed when she had finished. "Nothing to cause Barton and the Doc to get excited. Going back with me?"

Grace shook her head.

"Not until Captain Barton releases me."

"Look here, Doc, let's get this thing straight. Mean to say that you refuse to let 'Captain' Grace go back to her station until some time in the distant future when Captain Barton gets back? Is that it?"

"Don't blame the lieutenant," begged Grace. "He is acting under orders, just the same as you are. I shall remain here without protest until I am officially released," declared Grace with emphasis.

“You will? I’m off for my station, but mark me! Within two hours from now there’s going to be an explosion in this vicinity beside which a Boche 220 will sound like a popgun on the morning of July fourth.”

The explosion that Jimmy had forecasted, came somewhat sooner than he had promised.

CHAPTER XX

JIMMY STARTS THE MACHINERY

THE sun was well up when Grace was aroused by the lieutenant-surgeon. He held a slip of paper in his hand and his face was red.

“What is it?” questioned Grace, sitting up suddenly. “Is anything wrong?”

“Nothing wrong but myself.”

The lieutenant had received direct orders for Grace’s release from an authority so high that it aroused him to instant action. The order also included a rebuke in language so direct and forceful that it cut the officer to the quick.

“I am sorry, sir. You have done what you were ordered to do,” said Grace after she had read the order.

"It means a court-martial if the general means what he says," answered the surgeon sourly.

"Please don't worry for a single minute. There will be no court-martial, no come-back of any sort. Leave it to me. That hot-headed Jimmy Baldwin has said too much. I shall make him set you straight, and will do my part toward bringing about that result. Further, you know generals. They can say things that send your heart down into your boots. You are positive that you will be shot at sunrise, but long before you have received that impression the general has forgotten all about it; probably forgotten that such a person as your humble self exists. So has our general forgotten the offense and the remedy in this instance. You forget it, too, Lieutenant, asking your pardon for speaking so freely to a lieutenant."

"Thank you," answered the surgeon, laughing. "I don't give a rap anyway."

"That's the proper spirit. Everybody knows that it is the second lieutenants who are winning the war, so why should you care what a mere general says?"

This time the young officer opened his mouth widely and uttered a loud guffaw. When Grace left him to inquire when she might expect an ambulance in, he was still laughing.

"Captain" Grace was informed that no ambulances would report at that station until after dark, the station being too close to the lines to make it prudent. The patients were carried by man or horse litter for a mile down the road, where the ambulances picked them up.

"This means walk, for me, Lieutenant," she informed the surgeon. "With your permission I think I will stroll along."

"What about breakfast?"

"I still have some of my iron rations left."

The surgeon urged her to wait until he could make some tea for her, but Grace was eager to get back, so thanking the surgeon for his kindness and assuring him that she would not forget her promise, Grace started away.

"Hello, Buddy," she called to a man who, with head swathed in bandages, was sitting at the roadside, both hands pressed against his chin, eyes closed and face pale. At sound of her voice he opened his eyes.

"Get a blighty out of it?" questioned Grace.

"Yes," he answered, gazing at her with a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"That's too bad. I am on my way to pick up an ambulance, so you come right along with me and I will see that you do not have to walk all the way back to the next station. It is a shame to expect it of a man, but what can we do?"

Short of ambulances, short of drivers for the cars we have and—Wait! Let me hook up that bandage before you start. There! That is better. Who put on that clumsy dressing?”

“The litter-man.”

“I thought so. Take my arm and we’ll jog along together and help each other,” she urged cheerily, though her own head was aching desperately.

The doughboy appeared to be embarrassed. He said little, but kept stealing glances at her when he thought himself unobserved. Nor did he ask her how she had got the wound, though Grace already had made that inquiry of him, and learned that he had sustained a scalp wound out on post duty early that morning. A machine-gun bullet had plowed a furrow through his scalp, and he was weak from loss of blood. Grace noted the apparent lack of interest in her so far as questioning was concerned, but there were indications that he felt a much keener interest than words indicated.

They reached the end of their foot journey half an hour later and sat down outside the dressing station to rest.

“Think you know me?” demanded Grace, surprising him in one of those sidelong stares, and laughing up into the face of the confused doughboy.

"I—I may. You see I heard about you at the station back there."

"That wasn't the first time you had heard of me, Buddy. Come now, 'fess up. What is it that's on your mind?"

"I—I reckon I might as well tell you."

Grace nodded encouragingly, favoring him with a smile that swept away the barriers that had held back his speech.

"I—I'm the fellow who—who banged you over the head with a rifle out in the wire last night," he informed her, his face going very red, fists clenching and unclenching nervously, as he regarded her narrowly.

Grace laughed merrily.

"I suspected it, Buddy. That surely was an awful smack you gave me. How did you come to do such a thing?"

"I saw you when the light went up. The helmet, you know, was a Boche helmet. I was on listening post and I thought you were a Hun. You nearly fell on me when you stumbled onto that shell-crater. Well, I got up and sneaked after you. It was so dark that I couldn't see much but the helmet, and then I let go at you."

"It is a wonder that you didn't use the bayonet."

"Well, you see, if I walloped you over the head you wouldn't be so likely to yell. We had

orders not to raise any disturbance out there unless we were forced to it, so when we found any work to do we did it as quietly as possible."

"I see. Then what occurred?"

"Well, it was this way. I thought maybe you might have an iron cross or something and I turned you over to have a look and discovered that you weren't a man at all. I had knocked the helmet off and your hair had tumbled down and—I got sick at my stomach over what I'd done, and I was wishing a Boche bullet would get me right quick, for I thought I had killed you."

"It wasn't your fault that you didn't, so don't feel so badly about it, Buddy," murmured Grace, then she laughed and the doughboy grinned in sympathy. "Then what?"

"I carried you back a piece and turned you over to a litter fellow, telling him to tell the Doc about it and to report the incident to the captain at once. I had to go back to post, you know. Just before daylight I got mine while I was looking over top of the shell-crater. When I got in and had my wound dressed I asked the Doc about you and he said you would be o. k. soon. That was worth more to me than a Christmas present in France on Easter morning. Say, what were you doing out there, anyway, and in a Hun masquerade costume?"

"Coming in as a volunteer messenger for an officer whose regiment was in difficulties. Do you know whether the Aussies got through or not?"

The doughboy shook his head and said he didn't know they were trying to get through.

"I—I hope you don't lay it up against me—giving you that wallop," he stammered.

"Not at all. Don't worry about that, Buddy. The fortunes of war, you know. It was good of you to bring me in when you might just as easily have left me where I was, and avoided possible trouble for yourself."

"The Yanks are not that kind of animals, Miss."

"I know that, my friend. You and all of your kind are wonderful. You make me proud that I am an American. Here comes an ambulance. I know the driver. Hoo—oo, Jimmy Baldwin! A nice mess you have made of things. Don't you dare show your face to the Doc, at least not until you have made amends by unscrambling the mess you have got him into. Got room for this buddy and myself? We want to go to Blighty."

"Sure thing. Wait until I get my load. I'll save a place for him, and you can ride up with me."

Shortly after that they were on their way to

the field hospital, where Jimmy shamelessly related how he got an officer friend to call up headquarters and tell them of the brutal treatment "Captain" Grace was receiving at the advanced dressing station.

"It is a shame, Jimmy, but I do not see what you can do in the matter. I think I will write a note of explanation, assuring headquarters that the one who sent the word was misinformed as to the real facts. The lieutenant was acting under the orders of the captain. I will ask Major Price to o. k. the letter, which I will address to him and ask him to send it on. That will protect the Doc. He was very nice to me."

"Oh, what is the use in fussing?" growled Jimmy.

"Justice as between man and man," retorted Grace sharply.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders and said he reckoned she was right.

Upon reaching the hospital Grace made her report to Major Price and asked permission to turn in for a few hours sleep before resuming her duties. The commanding officer regarded her reflectively as she briefly related the causes for her long absence from her station.

"I hope you last until the war ends, Mrs. Gray," he said. "We cannot spare you, but I fear if you persist in taking such desperate

chances that your friends will be collecting your insurance before the Allies begin to collect their indemnity from Germany.”

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRAIL GROWS HOT

GRACE was awakened by two pairs of arms that were encircling her neck. The arms belonged to Elfreda Briggs and Anne Pierson. Anne was shedding tears; J. Elfreda's face wore a stern expression.

“Anne, please don't be sentimental, or whatever you call it. What is wrong, Elfreda?”

“You. I don't know what we are going to do with you. Does Tom know of these escapades?”

“Tom knows that I am doing my duty as I see it. Why?”

“Major Price has told me of this latest one, and really, Loyalheart, he is much concerned. He doesn't wish to send you away, but he feels a moral responsibility and says frankly that he doesn't know what to do in the matter.”

“Did he say that?”

“Yes.”

"Elfreda, will you do me a very great favor?"

"Certainly, if I can."

"Then please run right back to Major Price and tell him to please turn an ambulance over to me, for I shall be ready to go out as soon as I have had my supper. Let's talk about something less pleasant. Is there mail for me?"

Anne produced a letter. It proved to be from the lieutenant whom the doughboy who had confided in Grace had asked to write to Grace Gray in case of the soldier's death. The youthful doughboy had been killed in battle the letter said, and had died like a man. Grace passed the letter to Miss Briggs.

"Please write to the mother and the little wife and send the package I gave you, Elfreda. Write a sympathetic letter to each of them. Tell them his last thoughts were for them and that he died as he had lived—a man. What greater epitaph could be written over a human being?"

Elfreda promised to attend to it that night after finishing her day's work, and while Grace was dressing, she told them the story of her experiences with the "lost regiment" and the wonderful battle that the Blues were fighting.

"Oh, I do hope they are safe!" she murmured.

"Oh, Grace, I forgot to deliver a message to you. When I saw the major just before coming here, he asked me to tell you that the Aussies got through in time to save the regiment. A wounded officer who was brought in less than an hour ago conveyed the news."

"I am so glad," breathed Grace, her eyes shining happily. "Not that I had anything to do with it, but on account of those wonderful fellows. How I do wish you might have seen them give battle to the Boches, Elfreda."

"Thank you. I am quite willing to enjoy that battle at second hand, Grace Harlowe. You know I issued my ultimatum regarding following you, a long time ago. The wreck was the end so far as I am concerned. I'll desert if ever again they suggest my going out with you."

"Good-bye," answered Grace laughingly, as she ran out to the mess tent for a hurried supper, after which she reported to her chief.

"You are going to the river to-night," he informed her.

"La Selle?"

"Yes."

"Pretty hot place, sir. I think you must be looking to losing another ambulance."

The chief grunted, but made no other reply. Grace asked if the way was clear, and was in-

formed that it was. She found it so, but discovered it to be a rough way, full of perils, making rapid driving impossible. She wondered that the car stood up under the bumps to which it was being subjected, and that the wounded survived the terrible jouncing. Grace herself was tired when she halted long enough at the field hospital for a light luncheon late in the evening. Her head ached too, caused by the pressure of her helmet on the injured head.

In replacing the helmet on her head, Grace discovered that a piece of newspaper had been stuffed into the crown of the hat. Grace examined the paper under the light of her pocket lamp. Across the sheet in blue pencil she saw her name scrawled, and underneath the name a message to her. The message read: "Go back to the States and live! The Fatherland will win the war. Stay in France and you die!"

"Captain" Grace folded up the sheet of paper and laid it carefully under the driver's seat.

"He may be right at that, but I think, all things considered, that I shall stay," she chuckled. "I shall at least stay until I catch that fellow, then perhaps I may move on—toward Berlin."

Harlowe luck pursued her. The forward springs went down on that trip and the car was

useless. This accident happened within a quarter of a mile of her destination, which was not so bad as it might have been. Grace walked in to the station. She knew that she could not get another car that night, and thought perhaps she might find something to do at the station.

St. Souplet, on the banks of La Selle River, was being fought for, and already the Germans were evacuating the town. They had held it for four years, during which time the inhabitants had been practically slaves under the tyrannical Hun rule. There had been great suffering there, so it was rumored, starvation being the lot of many of the inhabitants, who had been forced to work for the enemy and give up their own food to them.

The smoke of battle was drifting over the French city even as the enemy evacuated it, and the big guns of the Twenty-Seventh Division were following the German retreat, hammering viciously at their heels as they withdrew.

When Grace arrived at the station she found a Red Cross officer, Captain Thomas, assembling a little group of volunteers who were about to go into the town to make a survey, a reconnaissance in the cause of mercy.

Grace listened as he explained the nature of the work before them. She was interested at once.

"Are you in need of another volunteer, Captain?" she asked, stepping up into the group about the officer.

He peered under her helmet, then extended his hand.

"We are indeed. What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Waiting to be enrolled in your party. Being a Red Cross worker I should be given first chance," she said smiling up at him.

"Hm-m-m. I don't know about that, Mrs. Gray. We may not come back."

Grace shrugged her shoulders.

"When do we start, sir?"

"Now. While I do not like the idea of your going in with us, I will admit that I should like to have you."

"Let's go!" Grace settled her helmet more firmly in place, adjusted her gas mask ready for instant use, and stood waiting.

Captain Thomas laughed.

"There is no denying a woman when she has made up her mind," he declared laughingly. "Did I not know you so well I surely should not permit you to accompany us. Aren't you driving?"

"Not now, sir. I am going to St. Souplet. My car is down," she added by way of explanation.

“Very good. I will report to the station that you are accompanying me and that we probably shall be in before daylight. The Intelligence Department reports that the Huns are out of the village. Wait here for me,” directed the officer, hurrying over to the dressing station to make a report that was to be sent back by the first ambulance or runner leaving for the rear. With no other preparation, unarmed, but full of fight, the little party set out bravely for the stricken city.

CHAPTER XXII

IN A STORM-SWEPT CITY

THE Selle River at St. Souplet flows almost due north. Its banks are extremely steep, and just east of the river stands a great railroad embankment ranging from thirty to forty feet in height.

When Captain Thomas and his little party drew near the little city, the tops of this embankment were being swept by Hun machine guns stationed on the heights a little to the eastward. These guns not only covered the railroad embankment, but also the streets of the

town of St. Souplet and the ground where the American infantry would naturally form for its attack. There were no enemy troops in St. Souplet now, for the first time in four years, and the inhabitants were too dazed to realize that at last the yoke of the Huns had been removed from their necks. The vanguard of the American Army was at their doors, even though this vanguard consisted only of a handful of hardy volunteers and Red Cross workers who had come not to kill but to save.

"It looks as though it will be pretty hot in there," averred the captain.

"St. Souplet is now No Man's Land," replied Grace Harlowe. "Shall we go in now?"

"Watch your step," commanded the captain, leading the way, all hands seeking such cover as they could find. Barely had they reached the western edge of the town when the whistle of machine gun bullets filled the air. This was followed by the bursting of shells, for the Huns, after having lived on the inhabitants for four years, now turned their guns on them.

"The Hun is such an appreciative animal," observed "Captain" Grace whimsically, which brought a laugh from Captain Thomas.

"Yes, think of it. They are seeking to cut off the hand that fed them. The brutes!"

Flattening themselves against the walls of

buildings, here and there dropping into gutters, taking advantage of anything that offered cover, the Red Cross man and his plucky volunteers entered the stricken city. Captain Thomas had divided his party into groups and assigned them to districts. They were to visit every house in the village, and make a survey of the needs of the stricken people, but even this work was full of peril, no one knowing what he might encounter on entering a building. For all the volunteers knew that every house might hold a squad of Boches with machine guns and rifles.

“Gas!”

It was Grace Harlowe's voice that first gave the alarm, in that shrill insistent tone in which the warning was always sounded. The Huns were pouring the deadly fumes into the village, determined to kill whatever life remained after they had deluged it with steel. Masks were snapped on and the squads started bravely out on their missions.

Such scenes of misery as Grace Harlowe beheld brought the tears to her eyes; such suffering as she gazed upon was unbelievable. Old women, children and old men, broken from four years of slavery, were found nursing the wounds that the Boche had inflicted with shell and bullets after evacuating the town. Those

who were able were protecting themselves from gas as best they could, many having masks on. Grace learned that these masks had been picked up or stolen from the enemy from time to time, in expectation of an emergency. Fortunately for them a strong river breeze had sprung up and cleared the town of the gas fumes ere it had penetrated the houses to any great extent. In the first house that Grace entered she found an aged woman wounded in both legs, lying on a bed of straw.

"Cheer up, Madame. The Americans and Australians are coming," cried "Captain" Grace. "The Boche is gone for good. Let me dress your wounds."

"It is too late, Mademoiselle," moaned the woman.

"We shall see," answered Grace cheerily.

Grace gave a careful first aid to the woman who, she observed, was in a serious condition, made her a cup of tea and, after doing other things to make the old lady more comfortable, left her to continue the work of mercy. When Grace stepped out to the street American patrols were entering the town, dodging from wall to wall, seeking cover from the enemy machine-gun fire.

"Any Boches here, Girlie?" called a dough-boy.

"No, but I smelled their breath a short time ago," she answered, referring to the gas, which sally brought a shout from the patrol.

"You're all right," was the laughing answer, as the men dodged on.

Grace was just about to enter an adjoining house when a tremendous explosion shook the street, sending down showers of plaster and stones, shattering windows, bursting in many doors, and throwing the Overton girl violently against the door which she was about to open.

"What is it, a mine?" she called to a soldier who was picking himself up from the gutter into which he had been hurled by the explosion.

"Bridge over Selle blown up, I reckon," he answered.

"That's good. It'll keep the Boches out," flung back Grace as she entered the house.

Enemy shells were falling in the town in increasing numbers, while overhead shells from the American artillery were wailing through the air on their way to the German lines to the eastward. It was along toward morning when Grace finally met her superior at the City Hall.

"Situation pitiful," she shouted in order to make herself heard in the din.

"Beyond imagination," agreed Captain Thomas. "Many will die. What have you done?"

"Given first aid where needed, and cooked a few light meals," answered Grace. "I wish our countrymen at home could go into these homes and see what the Hun has done. Wild beasts could do no worse."

"The Huns *are* wild beasts," interjected the officer, "but without the sporting instincts of the jungle sort. The latter will give you a stand-up fight, but the Huns—Bah! Mrs. Gray, your experience qualifies you to form an accurate judgment as to conditions here. What would you offer as a remedy, what would you suggest should be done—I mean immediately, temporarily?"

"These people should be evacuated, sir, in my opinion," answered Grace promptly. "I do not see how this can be done with any degree of safety for the next twenty-four hours, but what can be done, however, is to bring up field-kitchens and give them something to eat. They are starving, sir."

"I agree with you."

"I would also suggest that the wounded be concentrated at some point, say in the basement of this building—the city hall—for better attention. That they must have at once, or the loss of life will be appalling. Can't we get some of these patrols to do it for us, sir?"

"I fear not, Mrs. Gray. Your suggestion,

however, is excellent. How are we going to carry them? We have no litters."

"There is a lot of wheelbarrows at the lower end of this street. Why not wheel the patients? I have forty families on my list where there are wounded or sick persons. I would suggest that a field surgeon be sent for and put to work. Can that be done?"

"Surgeons will be up shortly. I see the patrols are coming in. There comes a body of men now," he added.

"Engineers," Grace informed him, having observed that they carried tools. "Where to?" she called.

"To bridge the river," was the answer.

"Pleasant job that, Captain."

"They'll do it. They're the 102d, the fighting engineers. I think your wheelbarrow idea is worth adopting. We will have the men fetch up the barrows."

"I will go after one now, sir, with your permission."

"Be careful. Pretty hot here."

"Yes, sir. It might be worth while in the meantime to have some one look up the mayor, if he is alive, and have him assist us in occupying this building. The doors are locked."

"We will break in. I'll ask an engineer officer to have the doors smashed in for us." This

Captain Thomas did, and the doors went down with a crash after a few blows from a maul. While the captain was investigating the possibilities of the city hall as an emergency hospital, Grace was running down the street to fetch a wheelbarrow. She picked out a good one.

"First come first served," she chuckled. "I think I'll get that poor old woman first."

"Getting" the woman was not an easy task, and Grace was obliged to exert all her strength to bring the woman out doors and place her in the barrow, the woman keeping up a constant moaning, begging to be left to die.

"Just have courage, Madame," begged the Red Cross girl. "I am taking you to a much safer place, a place where you will have the attention that you need." Grace wasted no more time in talk, for she had need of her strength. Grasping the handles of the barrow, and nearly upsetting it, she staggered down the street, bumping over the rough cobble stones, weaving from side to side in her efforts to keep her balance and hold the wheelbarrow on an even keel. She finally arrived at the city hall without disaster from shell or machine-gun fire, and without once upsetting her patient.

"Here's where I must call for help," decided "Captain" Grace. Getting the woman up the

steps and into the building, she knew was beyond her. Running in, she called to Captain Thomas for assistance.

The patient was carefully deposited in the cellar, which was large and with more conveniences than were to be found in the average home of St. Souplet. Others of the volunteer workers had begun trundling their burdens up to the city hall by the time Grace was again ready to start, each bearer confining himself to the houses at which he had called in his survey.

In this way the night passed, though to those plucky workers it seemed that they were accomplishing but little. Twice more did "Captain" Grace trundle her barrow to the hall, the last time bringing in two children, both of whom were suffering from gas. In the meantime a surgeon had come and taken active charge of the emergency hospital. Word had been sent back for soup-kitchens, though the Overton girl knew that many hours must elapse ere these could be brought up.

On her next trip out, Grace visited a home, a stone building of two stories, whose occupants had been reasonably well-to-do before the war, but who had been stripped of practically all their possessions after the Germans took the town. The mother had been severely gassed and the daughters wounded by shell fragments.

These three patients meant that many trips for Grace Harlowe. She took the mother first, promising to quickly return for the daughters. This time, instead of entering the city hall she laid her "case" down at the foot of the steps, there being sufficient help now to take care of the patients left there.

Grace ran all the way back to the stricken home for the daughters. She had lifted up one of them and had started staggering toward the door with her, when there came a dull roar and a deafening crash. The floor of the room heaved under her feet, stones came crashing down, the building itself seemed to be crumbling. Grace Harlowe felt the supports underneath her give way and was thrown down into utter darkness, with the ripping, rending, crashing sounds ever increasing in volume.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WORK OF A HUN BOMB

THE fall, and the shock of the exploding bomb, which had been dropped from an enemy plane, wrecking the house, had dazed Grace Harlowe and for a long time she lay in the cellar, protected by the timbers of the floor, one end of which had settled down into the cellar with the other end clinging tightly to the wall to which it had been originally anchored.

Grace finally sat up, felt her head, and wondered where she was. Her faculties returned to her in a flash of remembrance.

"The house was hit!" she exclaimed, under her breath. "What was that?"

Some one was crying softly, uttering low, heart-breaking sobs and evidently seeking to suppress them.

"Who is it?" called "Captain" Grace.

"Marie!" Marie was the second of the daughters of the woman she had taken to the emergency hospital.

"Are you hurt again?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

“Where?”

“In my leg.”

“I will see if I can get to you. Wait! If I haven’t lost it, I have a light.” Grace drew her flash lamp and pressed the button, but no light came. The lamp evidently had been broken in the fall. “Too bad, but never mind, Marie. If the rest of the house doesn’t fall on us we shall be all right—so long as we are here,” she added under her breath.

Crawling on all fours, groping cautiously, she picked her way over rubbish and wreckage to the opposite side of the cellar and found the girl. Marie had been wounded in the leg, presumably by a piece of the wreckage. Grace bandaged the wound, and made a pillow for the girl with her own gas mask.

Grace did not believe any one knew that she was in the house, and that therefore her chances of being rescued were not encouraging.

Daylight came soon after the explosion, and with it Captain Thomas discovered that “Captain” Grace was missing. He set to work at once to look for her. Failing to find any one who had seen her, he ingeniously began with the patients in the hospital, questioning them as to who brought them in. When he got to Marie’s mother he had the answer to his question. She told him that the young woman

had gone back for her daughters, but that neither Grace nor the daughters had come to the hospital.

Captain Thomas went down the street at a run, and had located the house when some distance from it. Climbing over the wreckage he shouted Grace Harlowe's name again and again, but there was no answer.

"They are in there, probably dead, but I can't take anything for granted. I must get help quickly," he cried.

Assistance was not easy to get in the circumstances, though there were many soldiers in St. Souplet waiting for the engineers to erect a bridge so they could cross the river. Four times had their bridge been shot from under them, but the engineers each time began their work over again, and were still at it. The Red Cross man ran out to the edge of the town and finally found a captain whom he knew.

"I've got to have assistance, Captain," he cried.

"How many men and what for?" demanded the captain.

"A company—a whole regiment if you can spare them. One of my best workers, a woman, the bravest of the brave, is under a house that was smashed this morning—an American woman, Captain!"

What the American infantry captain said in reply is not recorded in history. What he did do was to order a company—two hundred and fifty men—to place themselves at the Red Cross man's service and double-time it to the scene. The infantry captain marched them to the house on the run. When those doughboys understood that it was a woman, an American woman who was under the wreckage, they worked like wild men; they could not have been held back by enemy shells or machine-gun fire. All day they worked on the wreckage, until four o'clock that afternoon, when Captain Thomas, renewing his shouting, received a response.

"She's alive!" he cried. "Dig, you fighting devils! Dig as if it were the Kaiser himself that you were after!"

Uttering a cheer, the doughboys did dig, cautioned by their officers to be careful as they enlarged the hole through which it was hoped to rescue the imprisoned Red Cross woman.

"Steady now!" warned Captain Thomas. "What is your position down there?" he called to Grace.

"Protected by the floor. Perfectly secure unless the other end of the floor gives way. Dig down from the front of the house, but don't disturb the rear. We are liable to be smashed flat if you let the floor down on us."

They heeded her warning and began at the front, throwing stones and timbers into the street. The enemy was still hurling shells into the town, and now and then spraying the streets with machine-gun fire. There was plenty of activity in the air, but the doughboys gave no heed, even if they heard. The fact that an American woman was down there was all-sufficient for them.

"I have a 'case' down here," finally called Grace, who, up to this time, had kept under cover lest something fall on her and finish the job. "Please send a couple of men down; she can't help herself."

Captain Thomas was the first to let himself down into the hole. He grasped Grace by both hands.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed.

"Thank you too, sir. The old woman's younger daughter is here. I think the other one is buried somewhere in the wreckage."

The captain shook his head.

"She was blown out into the street."

"Gone West?" questioned Grace.

"Yes."

"Another black mark against those fiends," muttered the Overton girl. "This one has two wounds in the same leg, so please handle her gently. How do you do, Buddies?" she said,

smiling at the two soldiers who had come down to her assistance. "Sorry to have you go to all this trouble for me when you have so many things of greater importance on your hands."

"It's the surest thing you know that we haven't, Miss," was the hearty reply. "Not another little thing doing when a girl from God's country is needing our help."

They lifted Marie out as gently as possible. Then Captain Thomas sought to assist Grace, who thanked him and said she could manage it alone very nicely. Reaching the top she saluted the infantry captain, who shook hands with her and congratulated her on the work she had done, Captain Thomas having told him briefly of Grace's having volunteered to come to St. Souplet and what she had accomplished since arriving there.

"What is the situation, Captain?" she questioned, turning to the Red Cross man.

"Still at it, but the situation is improving. Getting the wounded assembled and under treatment. Evacuating civilians from the town as rapidly as possible. Kitchens expected up some time this evening, if the Boches don't blow them off the map. Plenty of work to be done, however, and will be for some days to come. The boys will be going over the river early to-morrow morning, if not sooner. I think you had

best go back, Mrs. Gray. You have had about enough, and more than one woman ought to be able to stand up under."

"Go back, Captain?" exclaimed Grace. "I shall not do that unless I am ordered to do so, until we have finally solved this human problem. This is our real work, ours to undo, so far as we can, the wrongs that the cruel Huns have inflicted on the long-suffering people of St. Souplet."

"Very good, Mrs. Gray, but if I see you flinching, back you go," warned the captain with well-assumed sternness. As a matter of fact he did not wish to lose his one woman assistant, who was a tower of strength to him and to the little group of volunteers who had come over with him.

Grace worked until late. It was on one of her rounds carrying food to those who were unable to go for it themselves, for the field-kitchens had come up and were serving, that she discovered a figure on the opposite side of the street, that looked strangely familiar to her.

The man who had attracted her attention was in the uniform of a private of the American Expeditionary Force. He was wearing the arm-band of a messenger, a runner, but, as Grace observed, he was moving rather too deliberately for a runner.

Putting down the kettle of soup that she was carrying, Grace Harlowe skulked along in the shadow of the buildings until she was abreast of him.

"I knew it!" exclaimed "Captain" Grace the moment she got a look at his profile in the faint light. "In an American uniform too. I wonder what that gentleman is up to now?"

Grace decided to follow him and find out what the fellow was doing, which she did, and the further she went in her quest the more convinced did she become that the man was acting suspiciously. She saw him halt and pick up the handkerchief that he had dropped, but in reality, she believed, to permit him to take a quick glance about him to see if he were observed. The next instant he stepped quickly between two buildings. The Overton girl waited a moment, then slipped into the outer end of what in reality was an alley, just in time to see the fellow going out at the rear end.

"Quick, Buddy, come with me!" she called softly to a doughboy who, rifle in hand, was hugging the wall of a building near by. He might have been on duty, and probably was, but he responded quickly to her hail.

"What is it, Miss?"

"Can you come with me? I'm following a man. I'll explain later."

“Sure thing.”

She ran on ahead, after cautioning him to proceed quietly, peered out at the other end of the alley, and beckoned to her companion.

“He is heading for the river, further up the stream,” she whispered. “Come!”

The man had quickened his pace, and they had done the same, Grace and the doughboy screened by one of the many hedges that were to be found everywhere on this sector. Soon they were obliged to run to keep up with him, nor did the chase stop until he reached the bank of the river.

“He is going in,” whispered Grace as the fellow began stripping off his blouse, but still they waited.

“What shall I do?” questioned the soldier in a whisper.

“Wait. There he goes. Stop him!”

“Halt!” The click of a rifle bolt punctuated the command. “Come back here and give an account of yourself unless you are thinking of committing suicide!”

The fellow halted, hesitated, searched with his eyes for the owner of the voice, then turned and plunged into the river. Quick as he was, however, the soldier was quicker, and a rifle bullet went through the man’s shoulder before he struck the water. The doughboy, tossing his

rifle aside, was in the water in a twinkling, after the man who was floundering and crying for help.

"Come out of there! This looks bad for you, Mister Man."

"I'm hit, Monsieur. Let me go. I'll have you taken up for this!"

"Of course you're hit. Lucky you didn't get it through the head. What has this fellow done, Miss?"

"He may have done a great deal. Please take him to headquarters and let the colonel decide what is to be done with him."

Before starting out for the village, Grace dressed the man's wounds, he pretending not to recognize her, though she knew very well that he did. The U. S. A. headquarters had been established at the city hall, where Grace and her companion haled the man and turned him over to an intelligence officer.

"We caught this man trying to cross the river to the enemy lines, sir," Grace Harlowe informed him. "I discovered him on the street in our uniform, and knowing him I suspected the fellow at once," she said.

"Who is he?" demanded the intelligence captain.

"His name is Ferrot. He is supposed to be a Belgian, and has been employed for some time

about the field hospital where I have been working. I have suspected that he was not all that he seemed, and that he has had something to do with certain attempts on my own life, but I haven't now, nor have I had, the slightest information to base that suspicion on."

"Ferrot?" exclaimed the captain sharply. "So? Thank you. What is your name and station? You are a Red Cross woman?"

Grace said she was and gave him her name and station as requested, explaining that the doughboy with her had shot Ferrot while the latter was trying to escape across the river.

"You have done well, Madam Gray. This man was discovered two nights ago, placing a bomb in the motor of an ambulance at a field hospital, but he got away before they could land him. We were warned to be on the lookout for him, as he is believed to be one of a group of enemy agents who have been giving us a great deal of trouble. The work those fellows have been doing is the lowest form of fiendishness that could be imagined. Tell me what you know about him."

"Might it not be wise to remove him, sir?"

For answer, the officer with a wave of the hand sent the fellow into another room under guard, following which Grace related the story of her narrow escapes that she believed to be

due to enemy agencies, then handed him the message which she had found in her helmet.

“Good! This is evidence. I thank you, Mrs. Gray, and congratulate you. I shall mention your part in this affair in my report. I hope to wring a confession from him, in which event, if it will be any satisfaction to you, I shall be glad to tell you of the result so far as it bears on your own experiences.”

“Thank you, sir,” answered the Overton girl, who, after saluting, went out in search of her kettle of soup.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FATE OF A SPY

DURING the night a white tape marking the infantry's jumping-off place had been laid through the town of St. Souplet, passing right across the steps of the village church and serpentine along the west bank of the river. In the early morning, in a heavy fog, the infantry was formed up and went over, followed by the engineers who were to man the light wooden bridges. Grace observed the going over with mingled emotions of pride

and sorrow, pride for the splendid spirit of the Americans, sorrow for those who would come back maimed and for those who would never come back.

Three days of desperate fighting followed, during which time Grace Harlowe labored with Captain Thomas in the village, her work ending only when every man, woman and child civilian had been cared for. Before leaving she was summoned by the intelligence captain, who informed her that Ferrot had confessed, not only that he had been acting under orders to destroy ambulances and hospitals, but to place "Captain" Grace in the hands of her enemies or drive her out of the service.

"What do you think will be done with the man?" questioned Grace.

"It has already been done, Madam Gray," answered the captain grimly. "There is but one fitting reward for the spy—that reward is oblivion!"

Two days later "Captain" Grace was back at her station, but her work as a driver was at an end. She was ordered to proceed to Paris and await orders to take up other work with the army that was expected soon to be on its way to Germany, for the Hindenburg Line was smashed, the war was drawing to a close, and the division that she had seen crossing the River

Selle had already fought its last great battle of the war.

Before leaving the hospital Grace received a letter from Colonel Mortimer, commanding the famous Blues, thanking her for the splendid service that she had rendered them, and informing her that she alone, of all the messengers sent back for assistance, had reached her objective. "In the name of myself and my glorious regiment, I thank you, and hope to do so in a more definite way ere long," concluded the letter. Just what that last sentence meant Grace did not know until nearly two weeks later, when, in Paris, she was summoned to headquarters and formally decorated with the American Distinguished Service Cross as a recognition of her pluck and "unparalleled heroism," as the citation expressed it. The close of the war and the signing of the armistice followed soon after. On that November eleventh, amid the jollification in Paris, in which Grace, Elfreda, Anne and the other members of the Overton unit celebrated the great occasion with Tom Gray, little Yvonne and the yellow cat, "Captain" Grace received orders to join the First Division as a Red Cross worker with the Army of Occupation, and to proceed with it to the Rhine.

Grace Harlowe Gray's work in the service of her country was not yet ended. Ahead of her

lay a further great service among the enemy spies and plotters on the banks of the River Rhine, a service that was destined to involve the Overton girl in many stirring situations. The story of her work among the enemy agents will be told in a following volume, entitled **GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY ON THE RHINE.**

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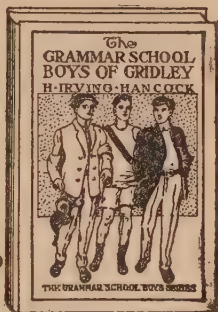
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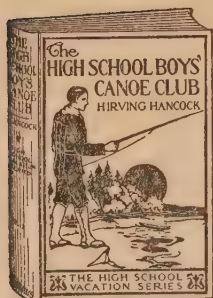
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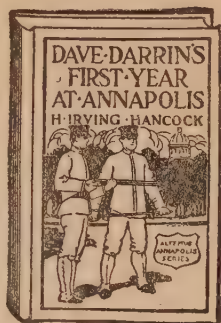
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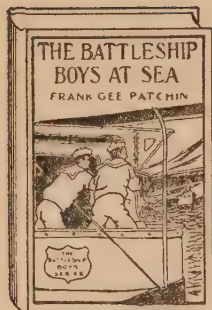
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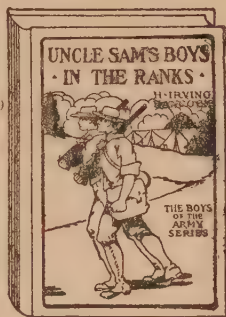
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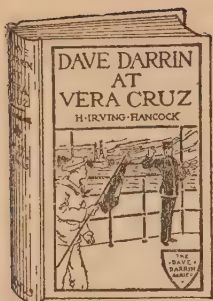


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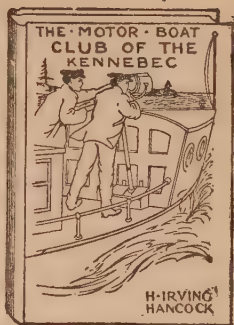
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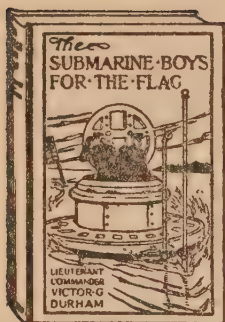


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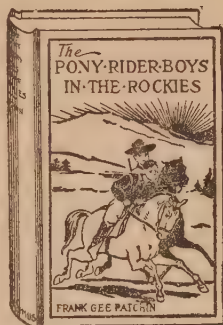
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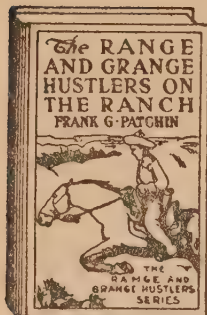


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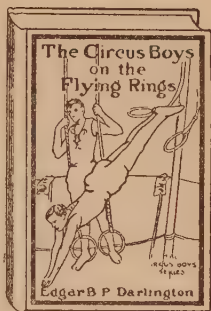
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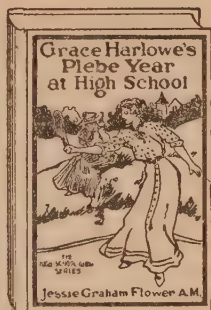
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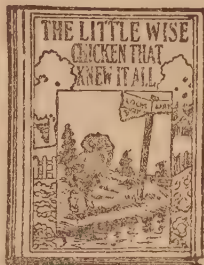
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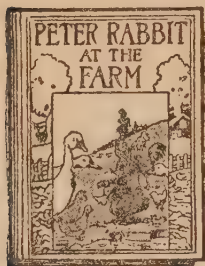
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